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**STUDIES IN
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN
INDIA : 1848-56**

By the same Author :
GLIMPSES OF KALINGA HISTORY

STUDIES IN
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN
INDIA : 1848—56

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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To
My Esteemed Professor
C. H. PHILIPS

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L.B.	Letter Book.
P.L.	Private Letters of Dalhousie (ed. Baird).
E.T.	Electric Telegraph (O'Shaughnessy, 1853)
F.I.	Friend of India.
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FOREWORD

New work on Lord Dalhousie's administration of India, 1848-56, is greatly to be welcomed. Ever since the publication of Sir William Lee Warner's two-volume study in 1904 Dalhousie has been somewhat neglected by historians. Moreover, by concentrating on Dalhousie's external policy and treatment of the Indian States and by dismissing his economic and social policy in a mere thirty pages or so, Lee Warner set a fashion which succeeding writers have tended to follow. Dr. Das's detailed study of Dalhousie's vigorous development of the Indian railways and telegraph and postal systems does much to restore the balance. He rightly regards Dalhousie's contribution in these respects as providing the frame within which the growth of the modern Indian economy took shape.

Dr. Das is the first writer since Lee Warner to make a careful examination of Dalhousie's diary and private correspondence. Quoting generously from this evidence, he expresses great admiration for the man and his work. In these pages Dalhousie emerges as a devoted public servant who literally gave his life in the service of the people of India.

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25th February 1959

INTRODUCTION

The years, 1848 to 1856, constitute a significant period of the modern Indian history. India was ruled during this period by the Marquis of Dalhousie, one of the most dynamic administrators ever in charge of the Indian Empire. He achieved two things. By his wars, conquests and annexations he gave a final shape to the British Empire of India; and by his new innovations and reform measures, he, more or less, heralded a new age. And after him closely followed the Rising of 1857.

To the historians the crowded political events between 1848-1856 and the Mutiny of 1857 proved formidable subjects for the history of that time. Consequently they lost sight of the socio-economic reforms of the Dalhousie era. Edwin Arnold, the first biographer of Dalhousie, writing within two years of the latter's death, concentrated mainly on Dalhousie's policy of conquest and annexation. He regarded the introduction of railways etc. as the "minor acts of Lord Dalhousie", which, according to him, though deserving "the most attention"...."must receive the least." Arnold posed a question, "Why have the first (the wars and annexations), then, occupied two-thirds of the imperfect chronicle, while reforms that will be bearing fruit when Goojerat is a tradition, and changes that will breed changes when Burmah has forgotten Gautama, are left to a few pages?" and answered, "The writer finds it difficult to reply without confessing to the fashion and the fault that obscure real history with the smoke of cannons and the shako of the grenadier."¹ He regretted

¹ Edwin Arnold, *The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India*, 2 vols., (London, first vol. 1862, second vol. 1865), vol. ii, p. 207.

that "the subject of education, including the establishment of universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and the first efforts of female instruction, must be left aside."²

In 1865, two works relating to Dalhousie's Indian career, '*India Under Dalhousie and Canning*' and '*A Vindication of the Marquis of Dalhousie's Indian Administration*,' were brought out by the Duke of Argyll and Sir Charles Jackson respectively. Dalhousie had spoken of Argyll as "my friend and kinsman",³ and the Duke, from his knowledge of having been a member of the cabinet which decided on some of Dalhousie's annexations, tried to defend his friend against what he termed as "ignorant injustice". He was aware that the eight years of Dalhousie's administration "were marked by events even more important than conquests and annexations".⁴ But devoting his pages to justify annexation, he dismissed the telegraph and post in one paragraph, and the railways and education in three or four more. Jackson's *Vindication* had nothing to say about the reforms. "I do not propose to write a history of Lord Dalhousie's administration", said he, "neither is it my intention to chronicle those peaceful glories, which throw a brighter light on his administration than all his conquests and annexations, his canals, railroads, electric telegraph, and other public works, as well as his anna postage."⁵

While the early writers on Dalhousie ignored his

² Edwin Arnold, *The Marquis of Dalhousie's Administration of British India*, 2 vols., (London, first vol. 1862, second vol. 1865), vol. ii, p. 207.

³ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 19 Aug. 1853.

⁴ Duke of Argyll, *India under Dalhousie and Canning*, (London, 1865), p. 40.

⁵ Charles Jackson, *A Vindication of the Marquis of Dalhousie's Indian Administration*, (London, 1865), p. 3.

reforms, there were others who partly misrepresented them. Sir Charles Napier who resigned from the chief military command in India on account of his conflict with Dalhousie, spoke in 1853 about the great Ganges canal thus: "At Hurdwar a magnificent canal was being cut, under the able superintendence of Lieut-Col. Cautley; but whether its advantages will counter-balance the effects of malaria, which it is supposed it may generate, is a matter for much consideration".⁶

The critics of the Dalhousie administration during and after the Rising of 1857 hardly took into account the significance of his socio-economic measures. Evans Bell thought that Dalhousie's tenure of office was "essentially radical, revolutionary, and destructive, both in imperial acts of state, and in minor fiscal and administrative measures"⁷ and he described him as "the very worst and basest of rulers."⁸ "The policy of annexation and the fame of Lord Dalhousie are indissolubly combined", said Bell, "and must stand or fall together. The false policy cannot be attacked or defended, without attacking or defending the false reputation."⁹

Many among the writers on the Sepoy War, rightly or wrongly, tried to discover from Dalhousie's reforms the causes of the revolt. John William Kaye interpreted the encouragement of female education and the introduction of railways and telegraph as the substantial causes of the Mutiny. Referring to Bethune's female school at

⁶ Charles James Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military, of the Indian Government*, (London, 1854), p. 42.

⁷ Evans Bell, *The English in India: Letters from Nagpore, 1857-58*, (London), p. 70.

⁸ Evans Bell, *The Empire in India*, (London, 1864), p. 26.

⁹ Evans Bell, *Retrospects and Prospects of the Indian Policy*, (London, 1868), p. 1.

Calcutta and the Governor-General's support to it, he said:

"Most alarming of all were the endeavours made, during Lord Dalhousie's administration, to penetrate the Zenana with our new learning and our new customs. The English at the large Presidency towns began to systematise their efforts for the emancipation of the female mind from the utter ignorance which had been its birthright, and the wives and daughters of the white men began to aid in the work, cheered and encouraged by the sympathies of their sisters at home. For the first time, the education of Hindoo and Mahomedan females took, during the administration of Lord Dalhousie, a substantial recognised shape. Before it had been merely a manifestation of missionary zeal addressed to the conversion of a few orphans and castaways. But now, if not the immediate work of the Government in its corporate capacity, it was the pet project and the especial charge of a member of the Government, and, on his death, passed into the hands of the Governor-General himself, and afterwards was adopted by the Company's Government."¹⁰

Kaye also suspected the general scheme of government education which was, according to him, "rapidly extending its network over the whole male population of the country", as having added to the discontent. Referring to the railways and telegraph, he said:

"Nor was it only by the innovations of moral progress that the hierarchy of India were alarmed and offended. The inroads and encroachments of physical science were equally distasteful and disquieting....It

¹⁰ John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, 3 vols., (London, 1864), vol. i, pp. 185-87.

was no mere verbal demonstration; the arrogant self-assertion of the white man, which the Hindoo Priesthood could contradict or explain away. There were no means of contradicting or explaining away the railway cars, which travelled, without horses or bullocks, at the rate of thirty miles an hour, or the electric wires, which in a few minutes carried a message across the breadth of a whole province."¹¹

Thus, it appeared to Kaye that "Dalhousie had no imagination", and that, "He could not understand the tenacity of affection with which they (the people of India) clung to their old traditions."¹² Kaye was the first great historian of the Sepoy War and his tradition was followed by others. While writing after Ripon's era of reform, G. B. Malleson wanted to discourage the introduction of a representative system of government, and drew "lessons" and "warnings" from 1857. "The determining cause of the Mutiny of 1857", said Malleson, "was the attempt to force Western ideas upon the Eastern people.... I would impress upon the rulers of India the necessity, whilst there is yet time, of profiting by the experience of the Mutiny.... I entreat them to realise that the Western system of representation is hateful to the Eastern races which inhabit the continent of India; that it is foreign to their traditions, their habits, their modes of thought."¹³ Writing in 1892 George Campbell in his *Memoirs of My Indian Career* criticised Kaye and Malleson while defending Dalhousie for his annexations, but their presumptions on Dalhousie's reforms held the

¹¹ John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, 3 vols., (London, 1864), vol. i, pp. 185-87.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 356-57.

¹³ G. B. Malleson, *The Indian Mutiny*, (London, 1901, written in 1890), pp. 411-12.

field. McLeod Innes believed that Dalhousie "rode rough-shod over all difficulties, among them the prejudices, feelings, habits, traditions and modes of thought of the native community; and would brook no advice."¹⁴ G. W. Forrest traced the special and religious causes of the discontent, and bracketed the establishment of telegraphs and railways and the opening of schools together with the introduction of the greased cartridge. He said in 1904:

"The establishment of telegraphs and railways, and the opening of schools, had created a feeling of unrest in the land, and appeared to the orthodox to threaten the destruction of the social and religious fabric of Hindu Society. The propagator of sedition and the fanatic, the two great enemies of our rule, took advantage of the feeling of unrest and suspicion to raise the cry that a systematic attack was to be made on the ancient faith and customs of the people, and they pointed to the introduction of the greased cartridge as a proof of what they so sedulously preached."¹⁵

This trend continued, and so late as in 1931, George MacMunn said,

"Steam, the electric telegraph, the application of science to the arts and crafts of daily life, were in 1848 waiting to be brought to India....yet the East India Company, had by design and by instinct, realised how difficult it would be to graft Western progress on Eastern stalk, and how many dangers might accrue therefrom. His Lordship (Dalhousie) did not."¹⁶

¹⁴ McLeod Innes, *Lucknow and Oude in the Mutiny*, (London, 1895), pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ G. W. Forrest, *A History of the Indian Mutiny*, 3 vols., (Edinburgh, London, 1904), vol. i, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ George MacMunn, *The Indian Mutiny in Perspective*, (London, 1931), pp. 7-8.

The tendency to criticise the Dalhousie reforms or to arraign them along with the greased cartridge or the Doctrine of Lapse resulted not only in belittling their importance but also eclipsing the history of their beginnings. Nor did the later biographers do justice to him. Two later biographers of Dalhousie in the 19th century were L. J. Trotter and W. W. Hunter who wrote their small monographs in 1889 and 1890 respectively. Trotter wrote for the Statesmen series and Hunter for the Rulers of India. Both covered the life of Dalhousie from birth to death. Trotter was convinced "of the injustice which clouded the last years of a life remarkable for rare achievements and heroic sacrifices in the cause of duty", and thought that he would be able "to follow up the good work begun by those who first undertook the task of vindicating the greatest and noblest of Indian Viceroys from the reproaches cast upon him by his own countrymen during and after the catastrophe of 1857."¹⁷ But he rather copied his predecessors and about reforms his account was negligible. Hunter, in the argument of his book, said, "Lord Dalhousie's administration is now sufficiently removed from us to permit of calm historical treatment". He pointed out that the Mutiny had passed away and allowed the permanent results of Lord Dalhousie's administration to appear, and that "his most permanent claim on the gratitude of his country is that by his far-reaching schemes of railways, roads, canals, and public works, he inaugurated the great revolution which has converted the agricultural India of antiquity into the manufacturing and mercantile India of our own day."¹⁸ Then in twenty small pages, he

¹⁷ L. J. Trotter, *Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie*, (London, 1889), preface, p. viii.

¹⁸ W. W. Hunter, *The Marquis of Dalhousie*, (Oxford, 1890), pp. 10-11.

summarised all of Dalhousie's great reform measures.

No less conspicuous is the omission of the Dalhousie reforms in the general works of the nineteenth century historians. Henry Beveridge summed up the merits of Lord Dalhousie's administration in fifteen lines, and in the form of an extract from an article in the *Times*.¹⁹ Trotter, in his *India under Victoria* allotted the same limited space to reforms as in his *Life of Dalhousie*. Alfred Lyall in his *Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India* did not touch upon the subject. And John Strachey, while describing various administrative aspects, and showing the progress of public works up until 1893, said, "Roads, railways and canals, and other works and appliances which facilitate communication are necessary in India.... It has only been within the last thirty or forty years, and especially since the transfer of the Government from the East India Company to the Crown, that we have at all recognised the duties which thus fall upon us."²⁰ No significance was thus given to the beginnings of these things before the transfer of the government.

These writers suffered from a great handicap because, Lord Dalhousie had appended to his will a codicil by which all his private papers were sealed up from use for fifty years from his death. "By such posthumous patience", said Edwin Arnold in 1862, "he (Dalhousie) has interposed between his death and the final estimate of his life the interval of a long generation, appealing for justice to a calmer and less prejudiced

¹⁹ H. Beveridge, *A Comprehensive History of India, Civil, Military and Social*, 3 vols., (London, 1862), vol. iii, p. 551.

²⁰ J. Strachey, *India*, (London, 1894, New Ed.), pp. 166-7.

day.”²¹ Nearly thirty years later, Hunter felt the same difficulty and said, “The time has not yet come to pronounce a final judgment on Lord Dalhousie’s work.”²²

The mass of Dalhousie papers lay sealed in his Colstoun House or in Dalhousie Castle. Had the words in his will been strictly observed, the papers would have been thrown open only in 1910. But in 1904 William Lee-Warner got access to them. With this advantage, Lee-Warner’s biography of Dalhousie might be regarded as an improvement upon the works of previous biographers, but in his study of nearly nine hundred pages, only thirty-five pages are devoted to the internal administration of Dalhousie, containing every item of his reform—public works, telegraph, railways, roads and canals, postal system, education, jail, ‘sati’, infanticide, human sacrifices, forced labour, finance and forest. Opening his chapter on internal administration, Lee-Warner agreed that “The dazzling successes gained by Lord Dalhousie in wars and in the field of foreign policy are apt to throw into comparative shade his equally great achievements in the conduct of the home affairs of the Government of India”, and then himself proceeded to summarise them as briefly as possible. In a somewhat uncritical approach to the subject, he went on to say, “When he (Dalhousie) found that Sir Charles Wood and himself were of one mind, he threw himself heartily into the work of moral and material progress throughout the Company’s possessions”; and referring to the correspondence which passed between them about “ideas and ambitions”, he remarked, “A careful comparison of dates

²¹ Edwin Arnold, *The Marquis of Dalhousie’s Administration of British India*, 2 vols., (London, 1862-65), vol. i, p. 5.

²² W. W. Hunter, *The Marquis of Dalhousie*, (Oxford, 1890), p. 17.

is needed in order to be sure to which of the two should be given the credit of the first move in any important undertaking."²³ It may be pointed out that Charles Wood came to the India Board when Dalhousie had already been in office for five years and had laid the foundation of the railways, the telegraph and the post, and had also begun the encouragement of female instruction and vernacular education, giving at the same time attention to the suppression of *meriah* and infanticide. Wood and Dalhousie joined in preparing the Education Despatch of 1854. In this matter, Wood managed to claim a greater share of the credit and got it. Dalhousie bitterly grumbled against this in his diary and private letters. Lee-Warner himself admits, "In the matter of education posterity has never given to Lord Dalhousie the credit that is his due not merely in organising the departments of public instruction, but also in laying down the principles to be followed."²⁴ But he did not attempt to substantiate his own statement with a description of what Dalhousie had done.

The historians of the twentieth century who have compiled the general histories of India, R. C. Dutt, V. A. Smith, V. Lovett, V. Chirol, W. H. Moreland, H. H. Dodwell and others, have not thrown much light on Dalhousie's reforms. Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt in their *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* said, Dalhousie "laid practically all the foundations of modern India",²⁵ and then they allotted only a few paragraphs to narrate them. In the *Cambridge History*

²³ William Lee-Warner, *The Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie*, 2 vols., (London, 1904), vol. ii, pp. 182-83.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

²⁵ E. Thompson and G. T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, (London, 1934), p. 418.

of *India*, instead of any attempt being made to evaluate the merits of Dalhousie's reforms or to trace the circumstances under which they were effected, the tradition of the Mutiny writers was revived. It was said:

"More provocative than settlements and annexations were other measures by which Dalhousie endeavoured to confer upon India the benefits of Western civilisation. In the railways which he began to construct, the telegraph wires by which he connected Calcutta with Peshawar and Bombay, and Bombay with Madras, the canal which he linked to the sacred stream of the Ganges, Brahmans fancied that sorcery was at work."²⁶

Several writers had written at different times on such subjects as railways, post, and education. But they were not concerned in tracing the history of the beginnings of those measures.

The object of this work is to trace the circumstances under which some of the main economic and social developments took place during 1848-1856 and the role which Dalhousie played. It is not my purpose to discuss whether these reforms led to the Rising of 1857, but in a casual reference elsewhere in this book it may be pointed out that the English historians rather held an exaggerated notion about the Western innovations as having led to popular discontent.

The original material at my disposal for constructing this work may be said to have been adequate. I am happy to express my thanks to Lady Edith Brown Lindsay, the great-grand-daughter of the Marquis of Dalhousie, for inviting me to Colstoun House and allowing me to use the nineteen volumes of Dalhousie's

²⁶ *The Cambridge History of India*, (Cambridge, 1932), vol. vi, p. 169.

personal diary written by the Governor-General in his own hand while in India; and to the present Earl of Dalhousie for his permission to see the mass of Dalhousie Papers now preserved in the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh. The Papers of Sir Charles Wood or the Halifax Collections were transferred to the Old India Office Library by the present Earl of Halifax in October, 1955, and I availed myself of the opportunity to go through them. Broughton's diary and correspondence were seen in the manuscript section of the British Museum, and a part of the Broughton Papers in the Home Miscellaneous Series of the India Office Library. The Papers of John Lawrence and the Mutiny Papers of John William Kaye were also available there. The correspondence of Sir Robert Peel with the successive Governors-General of India, and a part of Dalhousie's correspondence with him while in his cabinet, are preserved among the Peel Papers in the British Museum. Most of the official and demi-official papers relating to the period, the Consultations, Proceedings, Despatches, Board's Collections, Parliamentary Papers, Selections from Government Records etc. were made use of in the India Office Library, London.

With this material, an attempt has been made to throw new light on the beginning of those great reform measures, the importance of which has since been realised, though about their history very little has been said.*

* The work was originally a thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of London.

CHAPTER I

The Time & The Man

The innovations and reforms of the mid-nineteenth century in India were varied, the more important of which may broadly be divided into two main sections, first economic, especially the attempt to modernise communications, and secondly social, attempting on the one hand to develop education and on the other, to eradicate vicious social practices. As the nature of the measures themselves suggest, they stand apart as different categories having little immediate bearing on each other. It would be perhaps misleading to suggest a co-ordinating link between the economic development and that of education, or between the latter and the measures against the social crimes, except perhaps that they all were accomplished under a particular administration and within a limited period of time. The evidence does not show that the said administration had a coherent or premeditated policy to bring about all the changes together, but that they were effected as they occurred in quite different circumstances. The time called for several changes, and the man who ruled India was open to new ideas and bold enough to attack old superstitions whenever they came to his notice. He was assisted by a set of able subordinates in formulating his policies and was able to carry with him the Home authorities. Thus it may be said that while different factors during that particular time were responsible for bringing about distinct sets of developments, the forceful character of

Lord Dalhousie was impressed on all these developments in his tenure of office.¹

The second quarter of the nineteenth century saw a vast European scientific and technological movement. The railways, the telegraph and the modern post were established in the West. India, on account of her relation with Britain, came under the influence of that movement. Following upon the commercial success of the railways in Britain, the British enterprisers thought of the possibility of exploring the physical wealth of India and opening up the cotton-growing areas. The government in the meantime became aware of the administrative and general utility of improving communications. Sir Robert Peel was told by Henry Hardinge,

"...if we can proceed with our railway through the heart of the country, we shall make rapid strides in wealth and stability—for steam here would be the greatest instrument of civilisation for the people, and of strength for the Government."²

The development of science in the West was bringing India nearer to Great Britain. The steam-ship, telecommunication, and modern press brought the Indian news quickly to the British public, and day by day the public and parliamentary interest in the Indian affairs began to grow. As early as 1843 Sir Robert Peel

¹ All the aspects of Dalhousie's internal administration are vast enough to be compressed into one volume. His road and canal schemes, projects to develop commerce and navigation, manufacture of salt, cultivation of cotton and tea, agriculture and forest, and to explore coal and iron mines, though undertakings of great value, have been omitted. His part in the promotion of higher education, too, has been left out, mainly because his contribution in this field was not so direct and positive as in the measures relating to vernacular and female education.

² *Add. MSS.* 40475, fos. 283-84, Hardinge to Peel, 9 Jan. 1848.

anticipated the significance of such development and said to Lord Ellenborough,

"The rapid communication between India and this country is making, and will continue to make, a most important practical change in the treatment of Indian questions in Parliament. It will provoke constant discussion by the press and that discussion will increase the tendencies in Parliament to make India and Indian subjects the arena for political debate. It is difficult to foresee the effect of this, and of its influence on the Indian Press and the reaction of that Press on Newspapers and parties at home.

"Whether it be for good or evil we must look forward to the gradual establishment of a system which will subject every act of the Government in India to Parliamentary scrutiny. Every mail from India will provoke a series of questions and motions as the result, if the answers be not satisfactory to parties who will judge of Indian questions with English feelings and on English principles, without any local knowledge or experience of Indian affairs.

"The relations of the Government at home with the E. I. Directors, the Secret Committee and the local governments of India will be greatly disturbed by this increased influence of the House of Commons over Indian administration."³

Peel's anticipations were correct. It will be seen in the subsequent chapters that the changes brought about in India were greatly due to the parliamentary pressure on the East India Company. Especially, the introduction of railways into India followed a great interest shown in the subject by an influential class of people in

³ *Add. MSS.* 40471, fos. 318-19, Peel to Ellenborough, 6 June 1843.

England; and the introduction of the primary system of education was effected after a lively interest shown by the British Parliament in the matter, creating an opinion in the country that the Company's government had totally neglected that important subject. During the period under consideration an opinion in India was beginning to grow which had its effect on the opinion in England. It was already time when the actions of the Indian Government could be directly approved or disapproved by the British Parliament. The authority of the Directors was fast declining, and as it happened to be, those were the last years of the East India Company. The Rising of 1857 hastened the transfer of power, but grounds for it were already being prepared by the changing time itself.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the political unity of India became complete. The distances between the Hindukush and Burma, and between the Himalayas and the Cape urgently needed speedy means of communication. Consequently, the establishment of telegraph lines and the institution of modern post were essential for unified government. The telegraph was brought into existence in India within about ten years of its establishment in England, and soon after the Rowland Hill system of uniform postage began to work, attention was directed to the question of reforming the Indian system on the same basis and various schemes for this were submitted by the Indian Government in the years 1846, 1847 and 1848.⁴ The postal reform necessitated an immediate sacrifice of revenue. Whether the Directors of the Company were prepared for this sacrifice or not, the necessity of the time forced them agree to it.

⁴*P.P., H.C., 1852-53, vol. 76, pap. no. 87, p. 3.*

While the railways, telegraph and modern post were instituted in India as imitative reforms, the promotion of 'popular education' was original, emerging from a long-standing concern of the people of India, the Indian Government and the British Parliament on the subject. The education controversies of the time of Bentinck, Macaulay and Rammohun Roy ended with a decision in favour of English education, but after that the attention of the government was increasingly drawn towards education of the people in their own languages. It was seen in 1854 that the education of the masses was neglected except at very few places, and in higher education, there were only eleven English colleges and forty schools throughout India with no more than nine thousand pupils.⁵ Long before this ridiculous state of affairs was discussed in the British Parliament, a growing desire for education, both elementary and higher, was noticed among the people throughout the country. The popular desire for primary education was manifested by the establishment of numerous indigenous schools without aid from the government. About higher education, ten years before the above date, in 1844, Governor-General Hardinge reported to Queen Victoria:

"The literature of the West is the most favourite study among the Hindoos in their schools and colleges. They will discuss with accuracy the most important events in British History. Boys of 15 years of age, black in colour, will recite the most favourite passages from Shakespeare, ably quoting the notes of the English and German commentators. They excel in mathematics and in legal subtleties, their acuteness is most extraordinary. In order to reward native talent and render it practically

⁵ *W.P., I.B.P., Vide various stages of the Education Draft, 1st. Draft.*

useful to the state, Sir Henry Hardinge, after due deliberation, has issued a Resolution, by which the most meritorious students will be appointed to fill the public offices which fall vacant throughout Bengal. This encouragement has been received by the Hindoo population with the greatest gratitude."⁶

It is evident that from the time of Bentinck to that of Dalhousie, the question of popular education was growing in importance. During the discussions of 1853 relating to the Act for the future Government of India, great interest was expressed on the subject, and a strong desire manifested for its extension and improvement.⁷ The efforts of such individuals as James Thomason and Drinkwater Bethune carried the matter further. But for the successful experiment of James Thomason with the education of the people in their indigenous languages, it might have been difficult for the Home authorities to think of a system of systematic and efficient popular education throughout India. Similarly, though the encouragement of female education became a subsequent concern of the government, the whole credit for its start goes to Drinkwater Bethune.

Other aspects of social development, namely, the abolition of infanticide and the suppression of human sacrifice, may be regarded as the logical culmination of the British Government's and of British Officers' long abhorrence to such practices. The customs of 'sati' and infanticide had long attracted the attention of the government and their suppression was always advocated from evangelical quarters. The early governments, it may be said, had adopted a policy of non-interference in social

⁶ *Add. MSS.* 40474, fos. 176-84, Hardinge to Victoria, 23 Nov. 1844.

⁷ *W.P., I.B.P., Vide Stages of the Education Draft, 2nd Stage.*

matters, till Lord William Bentinck began his attack against the Sati. The reform movement which began with Raja Rammohun Roy marked the beginning of a new approach of the enlightened and the progressive among the Indians towards their own society. This had its influence on the Englishmen in India. In the mid-century, the English humanitarian movement once more got an ardent advocate in Dalhousie, who, unmindful of consequences, wanted to introduce such measures as the Widow Remarriage Act. It was natural that when the practice of infanticide in the North West Provinces and the Punjab was brought to his notice, he decided to put an end to it. The society was changing within itself. The movement to suppress infanticide was supported by the people themselves who practised the said custom for generations. The custom of human sacrifice among the hill tribes was revealed not long before Dalhousie's time, and he launched a campaign against it to accomplish its suppression once for all. In carrying out these social measures, a group of Englishmen including James Thomason, John Lawrence, R. Montgomery, H. B. Edwardes, Charles Raikes, Colonel Campbell and others showed great personal zeal. It may be pointed out here that the movement, which became so prominent before 1857, to bring about a rational outlook among a people or peoples who blindly upheld many antiquated customs as a part and parcel of their social life, was stopped abruptly by the British authorities after 1857. Social reforms were interpreted as a cause of the Mutiny, and thereafter the government adopted a cautious policy towards social legislation. The spirit of a Bentinck or a Dalhousie was never to be seen again in any of the Viceroys who ruled India after the transfer of power from Company to Crown till the end of the British rule.

Three main trends, thus,—the influence of a scientific movement in Europe, a long-standing concern over the subject of education, and the final phase of an English humanitarian movement in India,—brought about the various economic and social reforms. Certain other factors, however, such as the comparative peace of the time and the financial prosperity which followed it, promoted rapid change.

In his last letter from India Lord Hardinge said to Sir Robert Peel,

“I have also the happiness to state that this vast Empire is in a state of peace and security almost unexampled. The Punjab, for a century the arena for anarchy and strife, is as quiet as Hindustan. . . . In short I have a strong conviction that a lasting peace has been secured, with no cause of apprehension externally or internally. . . .”⁸

The Second Sikh War which broke out shortly after Dalhousie’s arrival was brought to an end within a few months. The Burmese War outside the Indian frontiers did not disturb internal peace. The other annexations and the application of the Doctrine of Lapse were effected without war. Thus during eight years of his administration, Dalhousie kept India for the most part “in absolute peace externally and quietude internally”, and this enabled him to divert resources to internal administration. Referring to the “busy improvements” in various parts of India, he said to Wood,

“I am ready to engage in all this to any extent which (?) my time here lasts. . . . But to do all this we want the universal fuel—money. Money can be

⁸ *Add. MSS.* 40475, fos. 283-84, Hardinge to Peel, 9 Jan. 1848.

got by reduction of debt, and by bold and judicious reduction of the masses of military expense.”⁹

Peace in India relieved the Home authorities of anxiety. “You cannot think what a freedom from care I have enjoyed in my own department all the year, and you have got everything into such order that the wheels of Indian Government work without noise or friction,” Wood congratulated Dalhousie.¹⁰

Financial prosperity went side by side with peace. On his arrival in India, Dalhousie said with discontent, “In this country the condition of mercantile affairs and of pecuniary matters is wretched. Public finance necessarily takes the same hue; and I whose ears tingled with the trumpeting which proclaimed expenditure and income equalised, find myself with a deficit on the year of about £1,400,000 and with orders in my hand from my masters for a bullion remittance of half a million—the second demand of an equal amount made on me since I assumed the Government six months ago. Take this plus the prospect of a war on the frontier, and you will be able to recognise the full blaze of the ‘triumph of peace.’”¹¹ But he stabilised the financial position within a short time. By several territorial acquisitions, a revenue of not less than four million pounds sterling was added to the annual income of the Indian Empire. From £26,000,000 in 1847-48, it increased to £30,000,000 in 1854-55. During the years 1847-48 and 1848-49 the annual deficit which had long existed still continued to appear in the accounts. But in each of the four following years the deficiency was converted into a surplus,

⁹ *W.P.*, *I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 3 June 1853.

¹⁰ *W.P.*, *L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 92-4, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 May 1854.

¹¹ *P.L.*, p. 28, Dalhousie to Couper, 4 Aug. 1848.

varying from £360,000 to nearly £580,000. During 1853-54 and 1854-55, there was again a heavy deficit, caused by the enormous expenditure which the Government, under circumstances, annually made upon public works. The Governor-General said, "....a large annual deficiency must and will continue to appear, unless the Government shall unhappily change its present policy, and abandon the duty which I humbly conceive it owes to the territories entrusted to its charge."¹²

A feeling was growing among the Indian administrators that the Company's rule needed some justification at least through works of public utility. Governor-General Hardinge, while discussing about the possibility of railways in India, had gone to the extent of saying:

"Hitherto, our Rule has been distinguished by building large Prisons; and the contrast with the Mughal Emperors, in this respect of public works, is not to our advantage."¹³

This was a frank opinion, but it represented the mind of many among the Company's servants at that time. By his financial commitments a bolder man like Dalhousie seems to have aimed at justifying the Company's rule by works of public utility rather than satisfying the directors with a surplus revenue. After the conquest of the Punjab, 3,600 miles of roads were opened for traffic, 800 miles were in course of construction by 1854, and 2,700 miles were surveyed and 800 miles traced by that time. "All this has been done in 5 years," said Dalhousie, "and at an expense of nearly £500,000.

¹² *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, Dalhousie's Final Minute, 28 February 1856.

¹³ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 853, f. 303, Hardinge to President, 3 January 1847.

This in one department of public works only should surely satisfy the public, that the Company's Government is not as inert in matters of material improvement as is alleged."¹⁴ It is possible to take a critical view of this. For example, John Lawrence said in 1855, "As regards the public works, the simple fact is that we have been going too fast and have exhausted the Treasury."¹⁵

After discussing these policies it is essential to understand the character of the man in whose hands were achieved many great objects. Much has been said about Dalhousie as an imperialist, but little about those aspects of his character which led him to work for the welfare of the people. In the following chapters of this work, an attempt has been made to throw light on his personal enthusiasm for economic innovations, his sincere desire for elevating the social condition of the people through education and other measures, showing as far as relevant, his personal contribution to the success of each of the measures of his time. Below is a sketch of some aspects of his personality.

It was said that "Among the business-like men whom Sir Robert Peel gathered round him in his last memorable Administration, none became more honourably known as an efficient man of business than Lord Dalhousie as President of the Board of Trade."¹⁶ In that capacity he gained enough experience in railway matters, and the Peel Papers throw some light on the interest with which he looked into the whole affair. Once he outlined the aim of his railway policy to Sir Robert Peel thus: "We shall meet the wishes of the

¹⁴ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 18 October 1854.

¹⁵ *L.P.*, no. 4a, pp. 251-52, Lawrence to Coke, 12 July 1855.

¹⁶ *The Economist*, 14 July 1855.

public—we shall benefit the parties really interested—and I feel satisfied shall do injustice to none.”¹⁷ After the fall of Peel’s ministry, Lord John Russell wanted to utilise Dalhousie’s railway experience by offering him “the command of the new Railway Commission.”¹⁸ But Dalhousie refused. His experience, however, was fully utilised in India.

As early as 1841 an Indian job had been offered to Dalhousie, the governorship of Madras. But that office seemed to him to be too small. He said:

“I have a seat in the House of Lords.... There is no other young man in the House of Lords of my standing at all. Is it not my line to improve the advantage which my approved commencement has given me, work on towards leading position in the House of Lords, profit by the fortunate opening as rapidly as I can, make hay while the sun shines, and there are no rivals to share my crop with me; and so secure at this early stage of my public life a standing of my own? At this moment I am a little known as a youngman who is likely to rise. But unless I work this feeling now it will soon vanish. ‘Out of sight out of mind’ is more speedily made true in London and politics than anywhere else. If I go to Madras, who at the end of five years when I return, will know my name?”¹⁹

Seven years later he was offered the Governor-Generalship of India. His appointment was somewhat unique, because he was selected without dispute both by the India Board and the Court of Directors, and though a Tory, was nominated by a Whig Government. Sir

¹⁷ *Add. MSS.* 40590, fos. 18-24, Dalhousie to Peel, 16 April 1846.

¹⁸ *P.L.*, p. 17.

¹⁹ *P.L.*, pp. 8-9 Dalhousie to Couper, 14 December 1841.

John Hobhouse, the President of the India Board told the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, "I do not think that a better choice could have been, under all the circumstances, made, and I am sure that, it will give very general satisfaction."²⁰ The Court of Directors elected him "the first, unanimously; the second, cordially."²¹ Dalhousie had one weakness, his health. On the eve of his departure to India, Hobhouse noted in his diary:

"There was no afternoon church so we took a walk. Lord Dalhousie has an affectation of the kidneys and could not leave the house. He told me his complaint was caused by over work or rather by relaxation from it. On quitting office he became ill. I do not like the appearance of his health at all."²²

Dalhousie left England with several complications. In India the condition of his health became worse, and seldom during eight years of his office was he able to keep himself physically well. But the physical weakness was counterbalanced by his mental determination to work. He was only thirty-six when appointed. Some time after his arrival in India, when an old Maratha Subadar, who had served long with Colonel Wellesley and had seen the Battle of Assaye, looked at Dalhousie and said, "You are very young", Dalhousie laughed and replied that he had more time for work before him.²³ Once he boasted, "If I have any public character at all I think I may venture without arrogance to believe that I am known to be a hard and willing worker."²⁴ In

²⁰ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 845, f. 206, Hobhouse to John Russell, 24 July 1847.

²¹ *Ibid.*, f. 231, Hobhouse to John Russell, 5 August 1847.

²² *Add. MSS.* 43751, Diary of Broughton, vol. 8, fos. 29-30.

²³ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1848, part ii.

²⁴ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Herricks, 8 September 1852.

India, he realised as he said, "If the Governor-General stops, everything stops: if he is not wound up, the department of the Government cannot go.... Every piece of business must originate with the Governor-General—put through him—and bear his signature or opinion before it can move, even in the wheel of routine."²⁵ He has been criticised for having concentrated too much power in his own hands, leaving less scope to others. This was perhaps true, but this arose through his anxiety to infuse efficiency in all the departments. "We all of us have only one and the same object—namely to bring the administration into the most efficient shape—to pull all together—and to give as little trouble as possible at home."²⁶ The personal interest of Dalhousie in everything led John Lawrence say, "A stimulus has been given to the general administration of India, and a general vigour infused into all departments, which if only carried on, must wipe out the reproach under which the Government formerly laboured."²⁷

Lord Dalhousie was an extremely ambitious man. Much of his ambition he satisfied through wars and annexations. That he was a great imperialist there can be no doubt. Some of his biographers and historians tried to defend Dalhousie throwing the blame on others. It has been argued that in his policy of annexations Dalhousie merely carried out the orders or desire of his masters at home. That might have been true to some extent, but it is difficult to deny his own aggressive nature. His own papers show that he was a relentless foe of the Indian princes and that he planned to destroy them at every possible chance. One or two instances may

²⁵ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1848, part i.

²⁶ *W.P.*, *I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 3 December 1853.

²⁷ *L.P.*, no. 4a, pp. 357-58, Lawrence to Dalhousie, 28 August 1855.

prove it. The supporters of Dalhousie advocate that circumstances forced the Governor-General to annex the kingdom of Oudh during the last days of his administration in spite of his own desire, and that he had no imperialistic design which is alleged. But three years before the actual annexation Dalhousie had given a little bit of his mind in a private letter thus: "The King of Oudh seems disposed to be bumptious. I wish he would be. To swallow him before I go would give me satisfaction."²⁸ Even when his health was fast declining and on account of which he thought of giving up the Governor-Generalship and return home, the conquest of Oudh dominated his mind, and he went to the extent of telling the Home authorities in October 1853 that he would like to stay on in office if only he would be given a hand to annex Oudh. A strictly confidential letter written by Dalhousie to Charles Wood (now to be seen among the Wood Papers) will speak for itself.

"I would ask you to tell me frankly whether you wish to make a change in the Summer of 1854, or whether it would fall in with your plans and wishes to keep me here as long as I can stay.... If I were to take Oude in hand, and if the period fixed for my relief were to come before I had completed my business, my care for my own reputation would be stronger than even my desire to get home, and I would naturally wish to ask to stay and finish my handy work and not to give my successor the honour, which I should have had the real merit.... It (Oude) is a splendid country—would cost nothing to take—not much to keep—would double its value in 20 years—would be an act of true benevolence towards the people of the country and would be a feather in the cap

²⁸ *P.L.*, p. 262, Dalhousie to Couper, 18 August 1853.

of any Government which plucked it. I say nothing of the Governor-General's cap, lest you should think personal ambition is at the bottom of my representation."²⁹

About the Mughal Emperor, Dalhousie wrote to his friend Couper,

"The old king of Delhi is dying. If it had not been for the *effete* folly of the Court, I would have ended with him the dynasty of Timour."³⁰

In case of Nagpore he annexed it first and then congratulated the Home authorities in following words:

"It is very satisfactory to know by anticipation that our act in treating Nagpore as a lapse will be approved. So much has the matter been regarded as a matter of course here, and so little interest has it excited, that for ten days the newspapers never even noticed the Gazette in which the Resident was converted into the Commissioner of Nagpore."³¹

So, this was Dalhousie as an imperialist. But it was only one aspect of his character. His personal diary and the private papers reveal that though a deadly foe of the Indian princes he was, nevertheless, a great friend of the Indian people. He worked hard for the welfare of his subjects, had a deep sympathy towards them and nowhere his papers show any hatred towards the country or its inhabitants. One is amazed to see in his diary the deep admiration he had for the Sikhs whom he conquered. He lavishly praised their valour and the manly character, and sincerely endeavoured to improve their material condition. Whatever contempt he had, he harboured it for the princes, and never for the people.

²⁹ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 18 October 1853.

³⁰ *P.L.*, p. 262, Dalhousie to Couper, 18 August 1853.

³¹ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 18 March 1854.

Behind most of his big projects, such as, educational schemes and half-anna postal system, the main motive was to do well to India. And in these works Dalhousie showed no less ambition than in wars and conquests.

In his ambitious projects he took immense pride and his sense of responsibility in the discharge of duty was great. Very few Governors-General laboured so hard as he did.

“On 2nd January I left Mooltan, in sight of the Soliman mountains bounding India on the west; on 2nd March I reached Moulmein, and saw from it the mountains of Burmah, which bound the Indian Empire on the east. It is a wide span, and I question whether any one Viceroy, since Kings were, has ever swayed his power between such far removed limits, or has been called by his duty to so gigantic a journey of inspection.”³²

The diary and other papers tell us that the Governor-General toured so widely in order to see the country himself and to promote its improvement. After the conquest of the Punjab, though it was left in charge of such able men as the Lawrence brothers, Dalhousie travelled over the plains “from North to South and from East to West” seeing quite enough of the several divisions “to judge of the physical character of the new province by his own personal observation” which resulted in his preparing a wide scheme of plantation and canal irrigation for that country. As Sir Henry Elliot, his Secretary, said on his behalf, “. . . if we succeed in framing this design and advance it in some degree towards completion we may at least enjoy the satisfaction of feeling that we shall leave behind us an heritage for which posterity

³² *P.L.*, p. 112, Dalhousie to Couper, 4 March 1850.

will be grateful.”³³ The Dalhousie Papers contain sufficient evidences to prove that the Governor-General had an innate desire to associate his name with some of the noble work for which he desired the approval of posterity. Most often he was proud of his new innovations: “Very large railway projects for all India are in hand, and have been referred to me—a very onerous reference. The electric telegraph for all India is on its way out. Uniform postage for all India is sanctioned, and will shortly be put in force. Let no body say we are doing nothing.”³⁴

A hard worker himself, Dalhousie wanted others to keep pace with him, and encouraged them as best as he could. But for his encouragement, Stephenson, O’ Shaughnessy, Cautley, Bethune, Thomason, Riddell Campbell and Raikes, besides many others, could not have progressed so fast as they did. When O’ Shaughnessy completed his experimental line of electric telegraph, he awarded him a reward of rupees twenty thousand without waiting for the sanction from Home. While recommending the case of Col. Cautley* for the K.C.B., Dalhousie said to Wood, “By this mail we transmit to you the official account of the opening of the Ganges Canal I shall be surprised if this record does not make your heart swell a little within you—as mine has done—at the recital of deeds so honourable to our British name, and of such benefit to millions of the Indian race. If it does, and I know it will, then let me claim honour—high honour—for the man whose genius designed, and whose skill and energy and perseverance

³³ *Home Misc.*: vol. 761, Henry Elliot to Board of Administration, Punjab, 28 February 1851.

³⁴ *P.L.*, p. 252.

* The constructor of the Great Ganges Canal.

have wrought this great work."³⁵ He said to Couper, "...if they don't K.C.B. him civilly they deserve to be drowned in the canal he has made", and again said after a few days, "If they do refuse I will raise a storm about their ears. For I will write straight to the Queen, as she permits me to do, and will lay before her what he has done for the glory of her crown and for the annals of her reign. And I know what the issue of that would be."³⁶ Such sympathy and determination were typical of Dalhousie's character. To those who did not satisfy him, he was equally hostile. About the Governor of Madras he reported to the President, "I have long looked upon Sir Henry Pottinger as the greatest political impostor of the last ten years. He has proved it at Madras. He has done nothing, is doing and will do nothing. Some say he is imbecile; some say he is administratively impotent; some, that he is indolent. Whatever the cause, the effect is the same—the Presidency is stagnant and despairing."³⁷ Not only that the Governor-General laid emphasis on efficiency, but in his great schemes of public works he wanted to mobilise the civil servants as well as the military personnel. Referring to the Queen's army he said, "Let them make for me surveys, roads, and canals, . . . let them give me a lift with the railways; let them help me to work the electric telegraph. In all these branches they can do us good service, benefit themselves, and reflect credit on the army from which they are taken."³⁸

Dalhousie's success in carrying out most of his reforms was partly due to the influence he exercised over

³⁵ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, May 1854.

³⁶ *P.L.*, p. 301 & p. 315.

³⁷ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 3 June 1853.

³⁸ *P.L.*, p. 226.

the Home authorities. In matters of railway, telegraph and half-anna postage, his arguments were so decisive that the authorities had seldom anything to disapprove. The Court's despatches on the above subjects show almost continuous approval of Dalhousie's works from beginning to end. Whenever there was a difference of opinion, in the long run it was the Governor-General who won. A strong and proud man himself, Dalhousie very often underrated his superiors at home, did not hesitate to use strong words against them whenever his own vanity was hurt, and was over anxious to defend himself for whatever he did. Once John Hobhouse complained before the Chairman of the Court of Directors:

"I have a long letter from Lord Dalhousie who is annoyed because the Secret Committee do not always praise him with uniform warmth. I shall write and tell him that praise is worth nothing from those who never venture to hazard an opinion nor tell honestly what they think. I am sorry his Lordship should be so touchy."³⁹

A little while after Dalhousie grumbled about the President, "Sir John Hobhouse addressed me as no gentleman would address his gamekeeper; and that if I listened only to private feeling, and not to public duty, I would not remain a day under this man's orders. The more I think of it, the more furious I get; and I never will forget it."⁴⁰

About Charles Wood, Dalhousie once said, "It galls one to be rated by a man whom you feel to be so much inferior to you." On another occasion he said, "He is

³⁹ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 851, f. 10, Hobhouse to James Lashington, 20 December 1848.

⁴⁰ *P.L.*, p. 67, Dalhousie to Couper, 1 May 1849.

fidgety and meddlesome. Under him it is not the Board of Control it was meant to be, but a Board of Interference, which it was not meant to be. He is very much disposed to treat the Government of India as no Governor-General will submit to be treated.”⁴¹ The Governor-General even on occasions could warn the President. Once referring to a letter of Wood, he warned him,

“I am unable to comprehend the censorious tone which marks some portions of that letter. My experience here, however, has taught me that men who correspond over a space of 10,000 miles should watch their pens; for ink comes to burn like caustic when it crosses the Salt Sea. I, therefore, repress the inclination to say what I feel as to some portions of your letter, and will merely reply that I am open to no blame; and will prove it In the same letter you advert to the department of public works and you tell me I ‘ought to remember that’ you ‘have a public to satisfy’ and that you would be glad to receive ‘some ostensible sign of making progress.’ In the meantime I certainly have been under the impression that we have been making ‘some progress’ in a systematic management of public works.”⁴²

Towards the Directors of the Company, Dalhousie had neither respect nor sympathy. He ridiculed them and enjoyed at their cost. It seems as if all through the tenure of his office he bore a sense of grievance against them.

“Honoured I have been in India, and rewarded highly, richly; but by my Sovereign, not by the East India Company. To them I owe nothing—not even

⁴¹ *P.L.*, pp. 306-7 and pp. 321-22.

⁴² *W.P.*, *I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 29 June 1854.

civility. There is more warm and cordial praise in any one single despatch to my predecessor during '45-'46, when the public voice here will tell you he jeopardised their Empire, than in all their despatches to me put together; though I have already added four ancient sovereignties and about two million sterling of fresh annual revenue to their territorial rent-roll.⁴³

With not very high opinion of his masters and to a great degree fearless, Dalhousie more or less steered his own administration in accordance with his own plans and ambitions. John Lawrence perhaps rightly said, "Independent of private considerations, it is a comfort to be ruled over by a Governor-General who has his own way."⁴⁴

By 1855, Dalhousie had finished his major works, but yet John Lawrence felt that "It will be a public misfortune if he has to go home."⁴⁵ He had imposed upon the Government of India heavy burdens. As Elphinstone said to Wood in April, 1855.

"... we are in what is called a state of transition. Great works are in progress or about to be commenced—mighty agencies have been called into operation and the direction of these things which must so prodigiously influence the material and moral condition of so many millions of men ought not, if it is possible to avoid it, to be committed to a new hand."⁴⁶

Lord Dalhousie was very much alive to what he had done in India. "When I assumed the administration of India eight years ago," he said, "it was universally

⁴³ *P.L.*, pp. 240-41, Dalhousie to Couper, 15 January 1853.

⁴⁴ *L.P.*, no. 4a, pp. 322-23, Lawrence to Courtenay, 13 August 1855.

⁴⁵ *L.P.*, no. 4a, p. 23, Lawrence to Dorin, 26 March 1855.

⁴⁶ *W.P.*, *I.B.C.*, Elphinstone to Wood, 2 April 1855.

spoken of as a most laborious and responsible office. It will not be difficult to estimate how infinitely more responsible and more laborious it has now become, when the additions which have been made to the duties of the Government of India since 1848 are recalled to mind."⁴⁷ When he said this, he meant not merely the territorial acquisitions but mainly the "changes and improvements in internal management."

"The whole direction of the Post Office throughout India now rests ultimately with the Supreme Government. The control of the Electric Telegraph throughout India has in like manner been vested in the Supreme Government. The especial superintendence of questions relating to Railways in India, has been allotted to the Governor-General-in-Council; and the Secretariat of the Department of Public Works, controlling the undertakings of the whole Empire, has been created and placed under his immediate orders."⁴⁸

Dalhousie's individuality was so much marked on every aspect of Indian administration that apprehension was entertained about the efficiency of his successor. "I hope Lord Canning will not turn out a Lord Auckland", said John Lawrence.⁴⁹ His eight years' rule had been one of the most busy periods of British India from administrative point of view. This was mostly due to the vigour of one man, the Governor-General himself. As the time closed upon his administration those who worked under him and knew him could become conscious of a coming loss.

⁴⁷ *L.P.*, no. 2, pp. 226-31, Minute by the Governor-General, 25 February 1856.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *L.P.*, no. 4a, pp. 322-23, Lawrence to Courtenay, 13 August 1855.

Towards the end of Dalhousie's Indian career few people knew that he was completely worn-out. He had toiled to the best of his capacity and had ruined his health from over work. But since he was only in the early forties of his life people expected a long and brighter future for him in his home country. Some thought that on account of mismanagement in Crimea and discontent at home Dalhousie was urgently needed as War Minister. "hope to see him Prime Minister some day yet", expressed Lawrence.⁵⁰ Such expectations, however, proved futile. Dalhousie came to India with a weak body, and during his stay suffered continuously. In 1849 he had complained, "You know very well that I hated the prospect of coming here . . . I was broken down in health when I started and had no business to come. I landed in Calcutta an invalid, almost a cripple. During all 1848 I was never one hour free from pain, and often attacked by the illnesses of India".⁵¹ In 1853, he again said,

" . . . ever since I landed here—now five years ago—and still, I go through much suffering, and have ailments which have damaged, are damaging, and will damage me—I do not believe that, during the last two years, I have been one single month (put in all together) free from cold, constant relaxation of the membrane, loss of voice, and a malaise most distressing. Every now and then severe ulceration takes place, as at Rangoon. The uvula is entirely destroyed, and who can say whether the throat itself may not be injured next . . I can't ever walk as other men walk; frequently I can't stand, but limp like a lameter. And I am rarely free

⁵⁰ *L.P.*, no. 4a, p. 301, Lawrence to Courtenay, 1 August 1855.

⁵¹ *P.L.*, p. 82, Dalhousie to Couper, 10 July 1849.

from the pain of it for twenty-four hours together. This is my life."⁵²

As days advanced, physical complications increased. By June 1855, he was unable to walk across a "room as smooth and even as a billiard board."⁵³ In his farewell address to India, Dalhousie said, "I have played out my part. And while I feel that in any case, the principal act in the drama of my life is ended, I shall be well content if the curtain should drop now upon my public course."⁵⁴ He was wearied and worn, and had no other thought or wish than to seek the retirement. On his arrival in England, Charles Wood comforted him, "A few months at home will I hope repair all the injury to your health which your Indian climate and severe labour has caused to it."⁵⁵ But day by day his health deteriorated and within four years Dalhousie died.

⁵² *P.L.*, pp. 240-41, Dalhousie to Couper, 15 January 1853.

⁵³ *L.P.*, no. 4a, p. 229, Lawrence to Edwardes, 23 June 1855.

⁵⁴ *Hurkaru*, 6 March 1856, Dalhousie's Farewell Address, 5 March 1856.

⁵⁵ *W.P.*, Letter Book, vol. vii, p. 200, Wood to Dalhousie, 1 May 1856.

CHAPTER II

The Beginning of the Indian Railways

PART I

The first public passenger-carrying railway in the world was opened on 27th September 1825 in Great Britain, and with the opening of the Liverpool-Manchester line in September 1830, the railway proved a great commercial success, and projects were set afoot, not only throughout Great Britain, but in the continent of Europe and in North America. No sooner had this been started in the West than the idea of introducing it into India began to dominate the mind of some Englishmen. Edward Davidson, the deputy consulting engineer for railways to the Government of Bengal, writing in 1868 said, "The idea of their construction in that country was first discussed about 1841-42".¹ Several other writers on railways hold the same view, but in fact the evidence of the Railway Home Correspondence Series proves that as early as 1832, the idea of forming a railroad from Madras to Arcot and Bangalore was suggested, as one that might in time be realised, and prove a remunerating undertaking.² In 1834, one R.N.C. Hamilton wrote a paper on railroads in the Doab, which was published in the Meerut Observer, and from that

¹ Edward Davidson, *The Railways of India*, (1868), p. 36.

² *R.H.C.*, no. 1, Report of Madras Railway Company, 19 February 1846.

time he was "thinking over the subject and collecting information."³ In 1836, a report was made to the Madras Government, upon the state of the internal communications of that presidency, by Captain A. Cotton, of the Engineers, in which he described and recommended to government, the construction of an extensive system of railroads, throughout that presidency. In 1837, the Madras Government directed a survey of the line from Madras to Wallijahnagar, within two miles of Arcot, and sixty-five from Madras. This survey was made by Captain Worster of the Madras artillery, and the Madras Government strongly recommended the execution of the work to be sanctioned by the Court of Directors.⁴

In 1841, one of the most eminent English Civil engineers, Joseph Locke, writing on the feasibility of establishing a railway from Calcutta to Benares and Delhi, commented, "Considering the amount of population, the immense number of pilgrims which frequent the cities on the line, the present amount of traffic in goods, the payment made by Government for the transmission of troops, together with the present inefficient means of communication I am of opinion that a much larger amount of revenue . . . may reasonably be expected."⁵ But it was said that the indisposition of the government to afford assistance and co-operation prevented any active measure being undertaken by the parties who had interested and exerted themselves in the promotion of this important object.⁶

³ *Ibid.*, *Vide* Stephenson's Report, Hamilton to Stephenson, 5 September 1844.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Report of Madras Railway Co., 19 February 1846.

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Vide* Stephenson's Report, Letter from Joseph Locke, 22 February 1841.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Report of R. M. Stephenson, 1844, p. 58.

In the meantime the progress of railways in the European countries and North America was rapid. By 1843, England possessed twenty-nine principal railroads and 108 branches; France had sixteen lines; the United States possessed more than 5000 miles of railway, New York alone possessing 800 miles; in Germany twenty miles had been worked out; Russia was forming five principal lines; and even Belgium had six lines.⁷ Wherever the railways were opened, trade and commerce received tremendous stimulus and various internal improvement followed. It was time that India should draw more serious attention from the interested persons.

The greatest among the first pioneers of the railway movement in India was Rowland Macdonald Stephenson. Before he had visited India or thought of railways, he had given considerable attention to the question of development of the resources of this country. After personal observation and inquiry Stephenson was moved by the immensity of the unexplored wealth of the country, the existence of minerals of the finest quality, and almost in indefinite quantity; and the success of railways in the West convinced him of the fact that introduction of the same mode of transport into India would achieve miracle. At first he attempted a few things, to familiarise the people of India through papers and journals with the idea of railway and its general effect, to call for support from commercial concerns and business communities, to collect information about the line of country between Calcutta and the famous central entrepot for merchandise and produce of all description

⁷ *Ibid.*, Extract from Letters addressed to Calcutta Papers, 11 February 1843.

at Mirzapur, and finally to move the government for prompt recognition and support.

Stephenson thought of a line between Calcutta and Mirzapur which was to pass through the rich and productive district of Burdwan. The uniform and gradual inclination of the road from Howrah to Raniganj, where the principal collieries were opened, presented advantages which were rarely to be obtained upon a line of equal length.* The existing trade and traffic on the line were heavy enough to encourage railway enterprise. For example, the imports and exports of Calcutta, amounted to £16,570,000 in one year, of which the chief portion had been received from or was conveyed into the interior. The traffic which passed the Jangypore toll on the Bhagirathi river, in one year amounted to 83,493 tons down, and 95,373 tons up the river, and of passengers 31,950 down, and 26,428 upwards. The traffic by land over the Annabad Bridge in the year 1837-38 amounted to 7,742 carriages of all descriptions, 168,694 loaded bullocks and other cattle, 33,180 passengers in various conveyances, and 435,242 foot passengers.

On Allahabad and Cawnpore Road, to which, the lines were intended to be continued, the year's traffic amounted to 107,613 hackeries, or carts, 172,377 camels, bullocks, etc., and to 63,720 coolies, employed in the transport of goods and merchandize—and 38,619 carriages of various descriptions, 122,751 horses, camels, etc., engaged for conveyance of travellers, and 266,052 foot passengers. Sugar alone, which passed the North West Frontier on its way to Calcutta, in the first six

* Exploration of coal was one of the prime motives behind Stephenson's railway adventure, both for the continually increasing supply required by the steamers, factories, etc., and for exportation to the Eastern Settlements.

months of 1842, amounted to 64,507 tons. The trade between Burdwan and Calcutta in salt alone amounted in one year to 12,962 tons, and in sugar and *goor* to 18,518 tons, of which three-fifths were sent by *land and water*, and two-fifths by land. It was calculated that the trade between Calcutta and Burdwan amounted to upwards of 107,310 tons a year upon the existing traffic, exclusive of passengers. After collection of various such statistical informations, Stephenson said,

"I may mention that, having travelled over and examined a considerable number of the European, as well as American lines of railway, I have no hesitation in stating that the amount of existing, as well as of the certain prospective traffic in goods and passengers, through several of the principal districts, with the facilities which the country affords for economical construction of railways, are calculated to render such an undertaking one of the most remunerative, and extensively beneficial of any similar work, with which I am acquainted."⁸

On 15 July 1844, Stephenson had put the matter before the Government of Bengal requesting for its "earliest convenient consideration", to which Cecil Beadon, Under Secretary to Government of Bengal, replied on 8 August 1844, "The Deputy Governor desires me to add that he is deeply sensible of the advantages to be gained by the construction of Rail Roads along the principal lines of communication throughout the country, and is anxious to afford to any well considered project for that purpose, his utmost support."⁹ A gazette notification dated 24 August 1844,

⁸ *R.H.C.*, no. 1, Report of R. M. Stephenson, 1844, p. 16.

⁹ *Calcutta Gazette*, 24 August 1844.

describing the establishment of railroads throughout the presidency of Fort William as an object of great public importance, seems to be the earliest government publication on the subject.

Stephenson was encouraged from many quarters. He addressed a letter to several of the principal mercantile houses in Calcutta for opinion, and got prompt replies.* He was also encouraged by people who

* Messrs. Colvin, Ainslie, Cowie & Co. replied: "...in our opinion such an undertaking would promote in the highest degree the best interests of this country, in which the consumer of Indian produce would largely participate; while for the labour of the British manufacturer it would ultimately create a demand, which the expectations of the most sanguine could hardly exceed."

G. Ashburner said, "...no country in the world has ever offered so tempting a field for the investment of capital in Railways as the Valley of the Ganges, from one extremity to the other."

Messrs. Livingston, Syers & Co. said, "We are inclined to believe that railways laid along the principal lines of communication between the stations throughout the country would, atleast, be a safe mode of investing a capital from the first."

The Calcutta Traders' Association replied, "...a Railroad upon some eligible line, taking in its course the most important stations upto Mirzapore, cannot fail to realise great advantages to the country, and be the means of developing products and resources that are yet unknown...."

Baboo Motilal Seal declared, "If an industrious and thriving population, numbering about 100,000,000—a large, active, and daily expanding internal traffic—cheap land and labour, with most of the necessary materials for construction on the spot, at prices equally low—and perfect security for person and property, are elements that will command success, then it is certain that a more promising field than Bengal for the investment of railway capital could not be found."

Baboo Ram Gopal Ghose said, "We may observe we feel a lively interest in the success of your great project from a conviction not only of the mighty changes it would tend to produce on the political, social, moral, and religious condition of the millions who inhabit this vast territory under British rule, but partly from an interested motive arising from the certain knowledge that it would increase our own immediate line of business."

had technical knowledge of the subject or other experiences.† Both from European and Indian concerns he received valuable informations and statistics.* The beginning seemed to be promising to Stephenson and he started publicising in 1844 a comprehensive report upon the practicability and advantages of the introduction of railways into British India, with full statistical data respecting the existing trade upon the line connecting Calcutta with Mirzapur, Benares, Allahabad, and the

† Captain Goodwyn, Garrison Engineer and Civil Architect of Fort William said, "...the subject has occupied my mind for some years past, both in England and in this country, and however much the phantom of 'Ill Success' may haunt the Indian public, it is only because they have at present but a superficial idea of the spirit of the age, the resources available, and the benefits to be derived."

Captain A. S. Waugh, Surveyor-General of India, said, "It would be highly beneficial to the best interests of the country by diffusing wealth and intelligence, where all is now poverty and ignorance."

(*R.H.C.*, no. 1, *Vide* Appendix to Stephenson's Report.)

* Baboo Moti Lal Seal supplied the following valuable information.

<p>Estimate of the quantities of undermentioned Staple Articles of Commerce annually imported into Calcutta from Hindoostan, West of Ghazeeopore, for exportation and local consumption, collected from the best informed Mahajans engaged in the trade.</p>	<p>Estimate of the quantities of the undermentioned Staple Articles of Commerce annually imported into Calcutta from Hindoostan, East of Ghazeeopore and West of Rajmahal, for exportation and local consumption, collected from best informed Mahajans.</p>
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	<i>Maunds.</i>		<i>Maunds.</i>
Indigo ..	20,000	Linseed ..	2,00,000
Sugar ..	25,00,000	Mustard Seed ..	50,000
Salt Petre ..	6,00,000	Teel Seed ..	5,000
Cotton ..	2,00,000	Wheat ..	2,00,000
Wheat ..	1,50,000	Dholl & Peas ..	2,50,000
Gram ..	2,00,000	Gram ..	2,50,000
Dholl & Peas ..	2,00,000	Opium ..	12,000
Oats ..	50,000	Indigo ..	70,000
Barley ..	2,000	Ghee ..	5,000
Opium ..	5,600		

(*R.H.C.*, no. 1, Appendix to Stephenson's Report.)

North West Frontier. In response to this several persons in England agreed to form a co-partnership for the above purpose and called themselves the East India Railway Company. They made Stephenson their managing director.¹⁰ For the time this company decided to direct its operations on the Calcutta and Mirzapur line. Simultaneous with this, another promoter, J. Chapman, thought of a line in the peninsular India to "commence at Bombay, ascend the Ghats, take the best course across the Table Land, pass the Eastern Ghats in the line of the river Godavari, and terminate on the Eastern Coast, at or near the harbour of Coringa."¹¹ Bombay, the western terminus of the main line, thought the above Company, was known to all the world as the great emporium of the trade of Western India, and the port by which its products were exported to England, China, Arabia, Persia, America etc. Coringa situated at the mouth of the Godavary on the Bay of Bengal had the best harbour between Cape Comorin and Calcutta. Three transverse lines were thought of, two to bring into communication the important towns and districts of Bijapur, Satara, Poona, Ahmednagar, and Aurangabad, while the other to unite with the main railway the capitals of Hyderabad and Nagpur, and the cotton mart, Amaravati. The country to be traversed by the main line and its adjuncts was in area more than equal to the whole of England, and included some of the most fertile land.* It was

¹⁰ *R.H.C.*, no. 1, Draft of Deed of East India Railway Co., 2 December 1844.

¹¹ *R.H.C.*, no. 1, Prospectus of Great Indian Railway, October 1844.

* The possibility of trade and traffic on the line was immense. From the Reports of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce it was gathered that 67,763 tons of cotton were exported from that city in 1842-43 the whole or by much the greater part of which came from districts from which, it was supposed, the projected railroads would convey it.

thought that from this very country silk, cotton, indigo, sugar, honey, bees wax, arrowroot, vegetable dyes, salt petre, opium, aromatic seeds, and some medicinal drugs might be exported. Railways were supposed to greatly develop the trade and be profitable by themselves. The supporters of this scheme named themselves as the Great Indian Railway Company.

With the formation of two railway companies, the problem was taken up by the Court of Directors of the East India Company and the Court desired "to give encouragement and support to Railways in India, and to a private company established for the purpose of undertaking their execution."¹² The concern of the Court led to the concern of the Parliament. By the middle of 1845, at the instance of the British Parliament, the Court sent F.W. Simms to India to look into the "physical difficulties that might possibly be found to prevent the introduction of railways into a tropical climate."¹³ Simms and the other two commissioners reported on 13 March 1846:

"Railroads are not inapplicable to the peculiarities and circumstances of India, but, on the contrary, are not only a great desideratum, but, with proper attention,

The traffic in the other direction chiefly consisted of salt. It was derived entirely from the coast, and used not only in the countries to be traversed by railways, but considerably beyond their extremities. It was calculated that the quantity of salt to be conveyed was 80,000 tons per annum. To this was to be added, again from the Reports of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, 38,380 tons of various imported articles, partly British manufactures or productions. The Company calculated the total traffic to the coast as 499,580 tons per annum.

(*R.H.C.*, no. 1, Prospectus of Great Indian Railway, October 1844.)

¹² *R.H.C.*, no. 1, Court's Minute dated 9 May 1845 referred to in a Letter from E.I.R. Co., 10 June 1845.

¹³ *Indian News*, 1 July 1850, *Vide* Lord Jocelyn's Speech in Parliament.

can be constructed and maintained as perfectly as in any part of Europe. The great extent of its vast plains, which may, in some directions, be traversed for hundreds of miles without encountering any serious undulations, the small outlay required for parliamentary or legislative purposes, the low value of land, cheapness of labour, and the general facilities for procuring building materials, may all be quoted as reasons why the introduction of a system of Railroads is applicable to India."¹⁴

About how the railways should be constructed in India, Simms wanted to leave it to private enterprise and capital, subject, however, to whatever equitable conditions and regulations the government might think proper to require for the promotion of their own and the general interests of the country at large; at the same time having due regard to that of the parties engaged in the enterprise. Simms' report gave an exhaustive survey of the line and laid various other proposals most of which were approved by the Legislative Council of India and its President, T. H. Maddock.¹⁵

The entire question of railways with all relative papers and correspondence was next placed before the Governor-General Hardinge. Hardinge was favourably disposed, but it can be said that his minute on railways did not give a great push to the subject. He admitted that he did not get the advantage of any personal communication with Simms and the other engineers, and therefore felt it "very difficult to offer any sound opinion" on such a complicated subject and hoped that the "English capitalists will not, without more information

¹⁴ *P.P., H.C.*, 1846, vol. 31, pap. no. 571, p. 1, Report of Engineer Officers, 13 March 1846.

¹⁵ *P.P., H.C.*, 1847, vol. 41, pap. no. 68, pp. 1-19, Letter from Govt. of India in Legislative Department to Court of Directors, 9 May 1846.

....and more substantial encouragement from the East India Company, enter into the speculation". This, too, he said with a warning that "in India I am confident the speculation of the railway company will entirely fail, unless it be largely and liberally encouraged by the East India Company." But Hardinge was aware of the political, and commercial advantages of a railway line, and especially judging it from a military point of view he said, "In this country, where no man can tell one week what the next may produce, the facility of a rapid concentration of infantry and artillery and stores may be the cheap prevention of an insurrection, the speedy termination of a war, or the safety of the empire."¹⁶

The prospects of the proposed railways in India appeared bright to the British capitalists and within three years from 1845 several railway companies were formed in England. They were the East India Railway, Great Indian Railway, Great Indian Peninsular Railway, Great Western Railway of Bengal, Great North of India Railway, Madras Nellore and Arcot Railway, Direct Bombay and Madras Railway, Madras Railway, Calcutta and Diamond Harbour Dock and Railway, and Great Bombay, Baroda, Cawnpore and Lucknow direct Railway Companies. Some of these companies in course of time could not materialise their plans and dropped out. Others underwent considerable change. Two of these emerged as the foremost, the East Indian and the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. The promoters of these two companies, especially of the East Indian Railway, became eager to begin the work as early as possible.¹⁷ But difficult problems cropped up both from the side of

¹⁶ *P.P., H.C.*, 1847, vol. 41, pap. no. 68, pp. 23-4, Minute by Governor-General, 28 July 1846.

¹⁷ *R.H.C.*, no. 1, *Vide* Letter from E.I.R. Co., 5 June 1846.

the railway companies and the Court or the India Board, which practically brought the railway question to a "complete standstill" for two years, till Lord Dalhousie came and lent his support to the cause.

At first the Court could not decide about the direction of the lines. George Larpent, the Chairman of the East India Railway, complained before the President of the India Board:

"The Court of Directors move so slowly in regard to East Indian Railways, that my patience is well nigh exhausted. I believe that there are as many opinions about details of the line as there are Directors, though all admit the urgent necessity of giving support to a main line. . . . Unless I get an answer soon, I must withdraw my staff in Calcutta, or the expenses will exhaust my funds; and if our proposed Company abandon the scheme, I feel certain no others will take it up."¹⁸

Soon after, a much more difficult question arose on the so-called 'Terms and Conditions'. After sufficient negotiation the Court inclined to guarantee four per cent. to the first railroad company proposing the line from Calcutta to Delhi, with branches. But the India Board protested and Hobhouse said, "I am not sure that we, here, shall consent to this outlay in the dark."¹⁹ This made the Company entirely passive in the Indian Railway matters,²⁰ and led to a wide difference of opinion between the Court and the Board. To summarise this difference in the words of Hobhouse himself:

¹⁸ *Home Misc., B.P.*, vol. 844, fos. 168-9, Larpent to President, 7 September 1846.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 853, fos. 65-66, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 7 November 1846.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 844, f. 251, Larpent to Hobhouse, 13 November 1846.

"We, that is, the Board and the Court are not yet agreed upon the Railway question. The Court propose to guarantee a dividend of four per cent. upon five millions. I have consented to take half, and guarantee four per cent. on two and a half millions. They want a long, I propose a short line. They would settle everything at once. I cannot bring myself to think we should do more than make an experiment."²¹

Slow and hesitant policy of the India Board towards the railway companies in question of guaranteeing interest to the capital invested, discouraged the promoters greatly and therefore no advance could be made in the work. Without guaranteed interest to their capital, the English capitalists were not prepared to invest money. There was a gradual rise of the rate of interest in England and on the continent. East India Company was itself raising a new five per cent. loan in India. These developments went against the interests of the railway companies. To save themselves from such difficulties as well as from unnecessary expenses in India, they wanted an early decision from the authorities, pointing out that time was precious and delay was harmful. But the President on the other hand did not think that "the public in India or England, will suffer by the delay." "On the contrary", he said, "after looking carefully into the whole question, and reading the recorded opinions of those whose judgment I am bound to follow, I am convinced that it is our duty to take no steps without all those preliminary precautions which in all other similar undertakings have been considered indispensable....If the thing proposed is such as the public at large have a

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 853, fos. 147-8, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 7 December 1846.

real interest in seeing accomplished, we need not be the least afraid of its being abandoned. But, if it requires all sorts of artificial props and unusual encouragements, the sooner it is given up the better."²²

The so-called guarantee system really needed serious consideration. Some like the Earl of Ellenborough believed that the government should prudently decline giving any guarantee with respect to the interest to be paid on the shares.²³ Others held different views. Unless and until the Government of India paid interest to the shareholders for their investment in railways, none was prepared to pay. Many friends and connections of the directors of the East India Company were speculating in the Indian Railway. The Court of Directors, therefore, wanted to do all they could to induce the Board of Control to afford the aid of the government. Since government aid was to be given in the shape of interest, which would be derived from the revenue of the country collected from common men, and be paid to the shareholders of railway companies, it seemed to some as an injustice to the people. As Ellenborough put it,

"There is in that country no moral sense of the wrong done to the Public, by promoting personal interests at the public expense."²⁴

The Board of Control was aware of the importance of the projected railways to the government. However much the guarantee system went against the people of India, for the very success of the scheme, the Board thought to give its consent to pay interest to the British

²² *Ibid.*, vol. 844, fos. 275-6, President to Larpent, 11 December 1846.

²³ *Ibid.*, fos. 284-6, Ellenborough to President, 25 December 1846.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

shareholders. Criticising the attitude of Lord Ellenborough, Hobhouse wrote to Hardinge,

"Your predecessor made an attack upon us, the other day, for the guarantee offered to the Railway Companies, and was not very complimentary to any parties, except himself. There is one comfort, and that is, he does not know the facts of the case; and I hope, when he does know them, he will do justice to all concerned".²⁵

Dispute over the guarantee system continued for some time. In India, while the Governor-General gave opinion in its favour, the Bengal Government declared against any guarantee. Finally, however, "after great hesitation and much reluctance" Hobhouse "agreed to a guarantee of four per cent. interest on a paid up capital of three millions for 15 years."²⁶ But this did not improve the matter. If the authorities agreed, the railway companies said that "the guarantee amounts to little or nothing".²⁷ The representatives of the East Indian and Great Western Railway of Bengal Companies thought it necessary to apply for a modification of the terms. But Hobhouse replied, "The most anxious attention has been paid by the Board to the subject, and they have informed the Court of Directors that they are not prepared to consent to any modification of the terms on which the authorities in this country have proposed to your companies to afford Government aid to the introduction of Railroads into India."²⁸ He informed the

²⁵ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 853, fos. 275-6, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 24 February 1847.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, fos. 192-93, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 7 January 1847.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, fos. 275-76, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 24 February 1847.

²⁸ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 845, f. 69, Hobhouse to Larpent & Macleod, 11 March 1847.

Governor-General, "Indeed, the Railroad Companies have refused our terms, and, as we will not offer them any others, I think their project will drop. If it does, we shall next consider whether it would not be better to leave the work to your Government. This is the opinion of the best judges whom I have been able to consult, and my belief is that it will be finally acted upon."²⁹

In the middle of 1847 the East India Railway Company requested to extend the proposed guarantee over 25 years instead of 15, and to this request both the Court of Directors and the Board of Control agreed. The authorities also relaxed some other terms. The President could now write to the Governor-General,

"The Bengal Railway will now go on. We relaxed our terms, granting five per cent, and giving the guarantee for twenty-five instead of fifteen years, and this has set the scheme going. The Bombay Company are striving hard for the same terms; the Court are inclined to grant them, but the Board hesitates, not being willing to add to the speculations of the money market."³⁰

But yet the Bengal Railway did not start working. The East India Railway Company could not make payment of a hundred thousand pounds when called for and once more the matter came to a dead-lock. The state of the premier railway company being such, the authorities did not give any consideration to others. The Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company was disappointed to understand that there was still hesitation as to granting the sanction requested and its Chairman warned the Court that its policy "would be most disastrous to the undertaking and its promoters, and might drive them to

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 853, f. 293, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 7 April 1847.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 854, f. 24, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 24 July 1847.

the unavoidable abandonment of their project."³¹ John Bright, M.P., who was greatly interested in the Bombay railways, was told by the President, "There are difficulties in the way of the Bombay Company with which the parties themselves are well acquainted, but which, of course, are not put before the public, and, when these obstacles are overcome, I have no doubt they will receive the same encouragement as the Calcutta Company."³² The other less important companies, so may be said, studiously avoided soliciting any information as to the views or decisions of the Court of Directors on the subject of Indian railways.³³

When Lord Dalhousie landed in India at the beginning of 1848, he saw the railway companies in a miserable plight, and from the state of inactivity which they exhibited, people were led to suppose that no intention existed of carrying out this great measure, and that the East India Company themselves were not sincere in their patronage, and entertained no wish to see the work consummated.³⁴ Under such conditions Dalhousie played a very important role in bringing the railway into existence.

Dalhousie's role in the railway affairs may be said to have been inadequately assessed. From Edwin Arnold to William Lee-Warner, including L. J. Trotter and W. W. Hunter, the biographers of Dalhousie dismissed this important subject with rather a general reference that he introduced railways into India. A large number of

³¹ *R.H.C.*, no. 1, *Vide* Letter from G.I.P.R. Co., 25 August 1847.

³² *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 845, fos. 248-9, Hobhouse to John Bright, 9 September 1847.

³³ *R.H.C.*, no. 1, *Vide* Letter from Direct Bombay and Madras Railway, 31 July 1847.

³⁴ *Friend of India*, 27 January 1848.

other writers, too, who have mainly dealt on economic, administrative or financial aspects of Indian railways, have ignored the historical aspect of its beginning during Dalhousie's administration.*

Dalhousie assumed office in January 1848. It was said that no Governor-General had ever taken charge of the Government of India under such peculiar and advantageous circumstances and that India at his accession was in a state of tranquillity.³³ Not worried by external or internal difficulties, Dalhousie gave his attention to domestic reforms, and among all others, the subject of railways drew his immediate attention. He was sorry to see that the talk over the proposed railway was at a breaking point and immediately sent a letter to Hobhouse describing the state of affairs. The matter

* The following are important among the writers on Indian railways.

- (a) W. P. Andrew, *Indian Railways & their Probable Results* (1848).
- (b) John Bourne, *Railways in India* (1848).
- (c) H. Clarke, *Colonisation, Defence and Railways in Our Indian Empire* (1857).
- (d) Edward Davidson, *The Railways of India* (1868).
- (e) T. F. Dowden, *Notes on Railways* (1873).
- (f) Horace Bell, *Railway Policy in India* (1894).
- (g) H. M. Jagtiani, *The Role of the State in the Provision of Railways* (1924).
- (h) R. D. Tiwari, *Railways in Modern India* (1941).
- (i) T. V. Ramanujam, *The Function of State Railways in Indian National Economy* (1944).
- (j) Daniel Thorner, *Investment in Empire* (1950).

³³ *Friend, of India*, 20 January 1848.

This missionary paper also commented:

"We trust it will be found an auspicious circumstance for this country, that its affairs have at this happy juncture been committed to a noble man whose recommendation for the high office he now enjoys was derived from the successful administration of one of the most laborious departments of state at a period of peculiar difficulty, and whose European reputation is associated with the greatest of modern improvements. In India he has a noble career of usefulness before him, and England and Europe expect that, in the improved spirit of the present age, it will be distinguished by the triumphs of civilization."

had come to a fix because of the negligence on the part of the companies and rigidity in attitude on the part of the authorities. The guarantee of the Court of Directors was to commence as soon as a sum of £100,000 was paid by the East India Railway into their treasury, and the Court extended the period of payment to the 31st of March 1848. It was the first business of the railway company to provide for this deposit in order to give an ostensible proof of its financial stability, upon which its very existence was said to have depended. But the company was unable to pay. The Court of Directors instead of being lenient, asked the Government of India not "to take any step which should recognise the Company until it was seen whether they made good their payment then." Dalhousie felt, "The orders were so peremptory that it was impossible to do anything towards advancing the affair."³⁶ The railway people themselves were not on a healthy footing. At Calcutta, Dalhousie saw the East India Railway Company having a large and very expensive staff. Much of their time was lost in long and sometimes unnecessary correspondence with the authorities at Home. When Dalhousie saw them, some had been sent Home in order to propose modification of terms of agreement to the Court. To avoid delay, Dalhousie consented to receive their papers and began to consider the points raised by them. But lest they would get a false impression that by taking up their case the Governor-General recognised them, he gave the understanding that his doing so constituted no recognition of the Company. To encourage them however he took up their papers and being satisfied that the points referred in them must be determined on general

³⁶ *Add. MSS.* 36476, f. 24, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 8 March 1848.

principles by the Court and the Government he sent them Home with his remarks.³⁷

Thus within less than two months of his arrival, Dalhousie was busy with the railway affairs. About internal improvement of the country he had hoped in his diary that he should make himself "acquainted thoroughly with the system of Government and its administration, with the condition, the resources and the wants of the country...."³⁸ But "he had not been four months in the country, before the dark cloud of war began to gather on the citadel of Mooltan."³⁹ By April 1848 the Second Sikh War had become inevitable and the attention of the Governor-General was exclusively required for the operations of the war. He said, "The unexpected turmoil in the Punjab and the commencement of hostilities there, shortly rendered it possible that I might be obliged to alter my plans (of administration). I refrained, however, from coming to very determination until the raising of the siege of Mooltan and the defection of Raja Sher Singh made it quite clear that a formidable war was imminent...."⁴⁰ For more than a year the Punjab affairs drew most of his attention and a considerable part of this time he spent on the 'frontier' and inside the 'camp'.

While Dalhousie was busy with the Punjab War, railway matters deteriorated further. He had earlier said to Hobhouse, "I have little hope that the Company will pay their money up."⁴¹ His apprehension proved true. On 15 March, the East India Railway Company

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1848, part i, January to October.

³⁹ *Friend of India*, 25 January 1849.

⁴⁰ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1848, part i, January to October.

⁴¹ *Add. MSS.* 36476, f. 24, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 8 March 1848.

intimated their desire that the time fixed for payment of the deposits of £100,000 might be further extended for a short period.⁴² The authorities extended it until 1 May, but yet the company was not able to meet the demand. Hobhouse was annoyed enough to say to Dalhousie,

"I do not think they will be able to make up the requisite sum. If they are not able, of course the whole project will fall to the ground, and we shall have to determine upon a totally different scheme. I wish you would favour me privately with your opinion on the subject and let me know whether you think it would be better to make the first Bengal Railroad a Government concern."⁴³

The Court of Directors declared, "the Railway Company having failed to fulfil the conditions imposed upon them by the Honourable East India Company, the Court's agreement is entirely at an end."⁴⁴

Such threats were interpreted by the railway companies as an indication to abandon the projects, and the promoters of the East Indian Railway bitterly protested saying:

"...the policy of the Court in the Agency to be employed in the construction of Railways in India has undergone a change, and that the views expressed in the Legislative letter of the 7th May 1845, upon the faith of which this Company was formed, are now to be overruled. If this be so, and if it be the intention of the Court to take the construction of Railways in India into

⁴² *R.H.C.*, no. 1, Letter from E.I.R. Co., 15 March 1848.

⁴³ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, 4 April 1848.

⁴⁴ *R.H.C.*, no. 1, Letter from E. I. R. Co., 16 June 1848, quoting Court's letter of 3 June 1848.

their own hand, it only remains for the Board of Directors to place the results of their labour, including the Plans and Sections of their line at the disposal of the Court, subject to such an arrangement in respect to the expenses incurred as may be equitable and just."⁴⁵

Expressing disappointment and regret the company still hoped that a reconsideration of the whole question would be made. Rowland Stephenson hurried back to England for further efforts to draw sufficient encouragement from the English capitalists and to bring the subject anew under the consideration of the Court of Directors.⁴⁶

The Court's letters for deposits were persistent, but it agreed to accept smaller amounts. Upon this the Great Indian Peninsular Railway made a deposit of £30,000 and requested for instructions to the local government at Bombay or the supreme government at Calcutta to prepare an act of incorporation for securing to the railway company the necessary corporate rights in India.⁴⁷ In August 1848, the East India Railway Company paid £60,000 to be deposited with the Court.⁴⁸

Yet the railway companies had to wait for one full year to receive the final approval. Because, though the Court made up its mind to begin with the experiment with the above deposits, the India Board remained hesitant. For the time being therefore the railway companies seemed to have been virtually extinct and this led the interested parties to bring pressure on the India Board. On 8 February 1849, a deputation of thirty gentlemen, interested in the promotion of railways in

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1848.

⁴⁶ *Friend of India*, 20 July 1848.

⁴⁷ *R.H.C.*, no. 1, Letter from G.I.P.R. Co., 8 July 1848.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter from E.I.R. Co., 19 August 1848.

India, waited on the Board of Control. There were present Sir John Hobhouse, the President of the Board, accompanied by other members, and Mr. Wilson, M.P., the Secretary; on the part of the East Indian Railway Company, Mr. Aglionby, M.P., the Chairman, with other directors, and Mr. D. Noad, the Secretary; the chairmen of the other Indian railways; Mr. Bright, M.P., Mr. Chapman; the president and other members of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and commercial associations; of the Blackburn Chamber of Commerce; and other members of Parliament and gentlemen connected with commerce. The Board heard the representations made by the members of the deputation. The President assured them that due attention would be paid to their statements and that less stringent terms would be offered to the railway companies.⁴⁹ It seems, however, from the personal diary of Hobhouse, that he did not view the deputation with satisfaction. "At India Board a deputation on Indian Railways came to me. Cobden, Bright, Lord Whirlcliffe, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Wilson Gibson and heaven knows whom. I heard what they had to say and then told them shortly what my present views were."⁵⁰

Since the matter was blocked at the India Board, the Court of Directors, in order to defend itself from the attacks made on it, prepared a memorandum. "The object I had in making out that memorandum", said Archibald Galloway to the President, "was to defend the Court of Directors from the attacks which have been made upon us out of doors in regard to these railways."⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Allen's Indian Mail (London)*, 23 February 1849.

⁵⁰ *Add. MSS.* 43753, *Diary of Broughton*, vol. 10, f. 99.

⁵¹ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 852, f. 33, Galloway to President, 26 February 1849.

But the attack did not stop. Lord Falkland, the Governor of Bombay, even went to the extent of saying, "I feel so strongly on this matter that I think if the Honourable Court do not give every necessary guarantee, and aid the construction of a line of railway by every means in their power, their conduct on this point will be indefensible when the propriety of the renewal of their Charter comes to be discussed." His "too great frankness" was, according to him, due to "a sincere and ardent desire to promote the welfare of this beautiful presidency (Bombay) and its millions of inhabitants."⁵² Being censured, the Court pressed upon the Board for its early sanction and the Chairman, Sir Archibald Galloway, made it clear to Hobhouse that even thirty thousand pounds made an immense sum to begin with.⁵³ So finally Hobhouse gave way and said to Dalhousie, "At last we have come to an agreement with the two principal Railway Companies, the Bengal and the Bombay: and the acts of parliament incorporating them, for all English purposes, will be passed during this session."⁵⁴

By this time (August 1849) Dalhousie had finally settled the Punjab affairs and was free to take up the railway matter directly into his own hands. "From the time that I landed in India", he said, "the orders of the Court were so peremptory, to the effect that I should have nothing to say to the question at all until I received further orders, and there were so many subjects of importance pressing for immediate consideration, that I did not attempt to go at all into the details of the Railways proposed for India. Now, however, it appears, that the time is at hand when I must be master of the local details

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 856, fos. 89-90, Falkland to Hobhouse, 17 March 1849.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. 852, f. 58, Galloway to Hobhouse, 30 May 1849.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 859, f. 189, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 24 July 1849.

fully.⁵⁵ He asked for, from Secretary Halliday, all letters on railways to and from the Court, all reports by commissioners, all minutes by previous governors-general and deputy governors and plans and sections.⁵⁶ It so happened that when Dalhousie declared "I must look to it", the railway companies too got their long awaited approval from the Parliament. On 17 August 1849 the East Indian and the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Companies received their legal sanctions.⁵⁷ The former received authority for making the first section of the line from Calcutta towards the North Western Provinces,⁵⁸ and the latter for the construction of an experimental line from Bombay to or near Kalyan with a view to its extension to the Malsij Ghat.⁵⁹ From this time Dalhousie practically became the master of all details. The Court and the Board having shifted the responsibility to the Government of India, immediately launched upon a quarrel between themselves.

The cause of dispute was the following. The railway contract having been finally settled it became necessary to settle the mode by which it could be worked out. The Chairman of the Court said, "It is the disbursement in detail of a million of money in Bengal and the like sum between Bombay and Madras in such a way as to promote the object which Government has in view. . . . That the Chairman and Deputy Chairman be authorised and empowered on behalf of the Court to supervise and control the proceedings of the Railway

⁵⁵ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. i, Dalhousie to Halliday, 6 August 1849.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1851, vol. 41, pap. no. 622, p. 209.

⁵⁸ *R.H.C.*, no. 2, Letter from E.I.R. Co., 16 August 1849.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter from G.I.P.R. Co., 17 August 1849.

Company under the provisions of the deed, and that, should personal communication with the Railway Directors be deemed necessary, the Secretary or the Deputy Secretary for the time being be appointed ex-officio for that purpose.”⁶⁰ The Board objected to it violently and the President wrote to the Governor-General:

“There is a great difference of opinion here as to the superintendence of the Railroad business. It was proposed to us to put it entirely into the hands of the Chairs assisted by Mr. Melville, irrespective of the Court, and the Board of Control. It was impossible to assent to such a proposition. The Board cannot, if it would, divest itself of its legal responsibility; and as it is very likely the proceedings will be questioned in Parliament it would be absurd to leave them to three persons, however respectable, not in communication with us; so we have rejected the plan, and desired the Court to choose an ex-officio Director to assist the Railway Boards and carry on the whole business in the usual way between the Court and Board of Control.”⁶¹

This annoyed the Court which began accusing the Board that all the delays in completing the arrangements about railways were due to the latter. The Court also expressed anxiety that the railway companies had no interest now in expediting the operations, while the Indian Government was paying five per cent. for money lying idle in their hands. Taking a bold stand against the Board, Galloway said to Hobhouse, “We have the honour, at the request of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, to call your serious attention to the

⁶⁰ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 852, fos. 74-5, Galloway to Hobhouse, 3 August 1849.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 859, fos. 221-2, Hobhouse to Governor-General, 23 October 1849.

mode in which the business affecting Railways in India has been conducted at the India Board.”⁶² The tone of the Court made Hobhouse apologetic and he said, “It has always been my wish, during the many years that I have been connected with the management of Indian affairs, to conduct the business in the way best calculated to promote the public interests, and to preserve the harmony and good understanding which ought to prevail between the Court and the Board, and it will be my endeavour, in commenting on your letter, to say nothing which can in any way tend to widen those differences of opinion that now unhappily interrupt the usual tone and tenor of our correspondence.”⁶³ It took some time however to re-establish a good understanding between the Board and the Court.

The above dispute did not affect Dalhousie’s interest. That he, “from his knowledge of the system of working railways”, was busy with the subject came to the notice of the interested parties and newspapers of London by October 1849. The Court of Directors, while forwarding the deeds of its contract to the Council of India, said, “It is however highly satisfactory to us that the Nobleman who is now at the head of your Government, has already given much attention to the Railway subjects, and we anticipate that great benefit will result in the course of your deliberations, from his Lordship’s experience.”⁶⁴ Satisfied with the interest which the Government of India took, the Court desired that no time should be lost in taking necessary steps to place the

⁶² *Ibid.*, vol. 852, f. 95, Chairs to President, 25 October 1849.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, vol. 851, fos. 44-5, President to Chairman and Deputy Chairman, 29 October 1849.

⁶⁴ Railway Despatches to Indian Govt., vol. i, pp. 3-25, Financial Letter to India, 14 November 1849.

land required for railway undertakings at the disposal of the respective railway companies, in order that they might commence their operations at the soonest possible time.⁶⁵ Dalhousie, even in the midst of multifarious work when the pressure of duty took him to Singapore, visiting all the settlements in that quarter and looking in at Moulmecin and in Arracan, decided soon to go to Calcutta and to remain there for some time "to settle something definite as to Railway operations."⁶⁶

In the meantime the Court made it clear to the railway companies that the ultimate decision of railway matters rested with the Government of India.⁶⁷ The companies accepted this principle. The directors of the East India Railway appointed Stephenson as their 'Agent to the Company' in India, and Turnbull as the Resident Engineer in chief. Stephenson was instructed,

"As Agent you will possess a general control and supervision over all the affairs and all the servants of the Company in India, excepting the Resident Engineer in Chief who will be subject only to the Board of Directors. You will both be amenable to the control and supervision to be exercised by the Government of India as provided by the contract, and in the matters here-in-after stated you will act jointly."⁶⁸

Stephenson was advised as his first duty to report his arrival to the Government of India, and at the earliest moment to settle the mode in which the Government of India might intend and determine to exercise the control and supervision vested in them by the contract.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Add. MSS.* 36477, f. 121, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, December 1849.

⁶⁷ *Railway Despatches*, vol. i, pp. 34-5, *Vide* Financial Despatch to Bombay, 3 April 1850.

⁶⁸ *R.H.C.*, no. 3, Letter from E.I.R. Co., 26 February 1850.

By the end of 1849 preliminary talks on railways seemed to have progressed far both in Bengal and Bombay. In Bengal things were done under the eyes of the Governor-General. In Bombay, the promoters were encouraged to hear that Dalhousie had given much attention to the subject, and the Governor, Lord Falkland prepared to discuss the matter with him.⁶⁹ It was only the presidency of Madras which did not draw the attention of the Home authorities, and its Governor, Henry Pottinger, complained to the President, "We have all been sadly disappointed at the guarantee for railways not being extended to Madras. It is my most cordial and conscientious opinion that the project was more certain of success here than at either of the other Presidencies, because we have a level country and abundant material of every kind."⁷⁰

The Court and the companies now depended on the Indian Government on such matters as the selection of lines and the control of work. Hobhouse himself, "not at all satisfied with what has been done in regard to Indian railways", and still worried by the "most disagreeable quarrels between the authorities" which "differences are not yet at an end", hoped that Dalhousie's "sole authority at Calcutta will be productive of better effects".⁷¹ Dalhousie on his part did not want the matter to move slowly. In March 1850, he went to Calcutta, as he said, "for the express purpose of expediting matters", but was sorry to see that "the officers had

⁶⁹ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 856, pp. 309-10, *Vide* Falkland to Hobhouse, 3 January 1850.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 308, Pottinger to Hobhouse, 27 December 1849.

⁷¹ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 23 January 1850.

not come, and till they came nothing could be done.”⁷² He said to Hobhouse, “One of my chief objects in coming round by Calcutta was to see and confer with the Railway people regarding their section from Calcutta. But they are not here; and their local authorities can form no guess of when any of them will be here.”⁷³

On 1 May, however, the experts of the East India Railway Company arrived in Calcutta, and George Turnbull lost no time in opening communication with the government on various arrangements, such as, the line of railway to be adopted, the possession of land for the same, and the mode of carrying the work into execution.⁷⁴ The communication was forwarded to the Governor-General who was then at Simla. Dalhousie received the reports and fully minuted on the subject. Sympathetic towards the companies, he asked the Court to modify some points of their orders in order to give the concern a chance of success, and informed the President, “This reference will cause no delay: for the orders of the Council are precise that the line shall commence at Calcutta and at once . . . and the President in Council will proceed at once to put the company in possession of the land . . .”⁷⁵ In February 1850 the Bombay people received their railway staff and the Governor was ready in advance “to set them to work in right earnest.”⁷⁶ John Hobhouse could now say that “at last we have made a beginning; and that the staff

⁷² *Add. MSS.* 36477, f. 242.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, fos. 176-77, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 25 March 1850.

⁷⁴ *R.H.C.*, no. 3, Letter from Turnbull, 29 May 1850.

⁷⁵ *Add. MSS.* 36477, fos. 242-43, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 11 July 1850.

⁷⁶ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, f. 10, Falkland to Hobhouse, 4 February 1850.

of the Railway Company has set to work in good earnest."⁷⁷

On 11 June 1850, the British Parliament debated upon the Indian railways. Lord Jocelyn from the *Opposition brought on his motion and dealt at length on the subject*. Tracing the history of the Indian railways from 1845, he said,

"If they looked to India, a country with a population of 100,000,000; a country extending over twentyfive degrees of north latitude, and thirty degrees of longitude was under British rule, and when they considered the mighty empire that was under that rule, England might well feel proud. But when they looked to those remains that had been left behind by great Hindoo Governors, showing that they felt for the wants of the people, and which were found in every part of India, they must feel that the time had come for England to step forward and lay down for herself some lasting memorials which might tell the future ages that amidst all her triumphs and glories she did not neglect her duty to her subjects."⁷⁸

Hobhouse said in his diary: "He (Jocelyn) made a good speech. James Wilson answered him and showed what had been done. Some observation were made by Colebrook and Hume to which I replied, and as the papers were granted Jocelyn was satisfied."⁷⁹ The discussion in the House of Commons, so Hobhouse felt, did good, and rectified several prevalent errors.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 859, f. 268, Hobhouse to Falkland, 4 April 1850.

⁷⁸ *Indian News*, 1 July 1850.

⁷⁹ *Add. MSS.* 43754, Diary of Broughton, vol. 11, f. 66.

⁸⁰ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 859, f. 295, Hobhouse to Falkland, 24 June 1850.

Soon after, on 4 July 1850, Dalhousie issued from Chini the first of his several important railway minutes. He rejected the proceedings of 1845-46 and the report then made which recommended in favour of a route by the left bank of the river.⁸¹ This line was much regretted by him from the beginning though so far he had no authority to alter the previous plan. But he had complained that "they (the Court) have tied up my hands as to where the line should first be made; and I sincerely believe they have selected the most unfavourable portion for an encouraging commencement."⁸² Now with the power to select his own lines, he did not want to follow the decisions made by others and satisfied with his own as well as the observations of F. W. Simms, he proposed that a line of railway should be constructed from Howrah on the right bank of the Hooghly to the coal fields at or near Raniganj⁸³ Dalhousie recommended that on this first experimental line and on every other occasion land should be taken sufficient for the formation of a double line of railway. According to his decision, the line proceeding to Serampore, Chinsura and Hooghly should be carried in the direction of Burdwan to such a point as might be left to the government to select. This point was either to be Pundooah, as suggested by the railway company, or some other point not more than fifty miles from Calcutta. From that point, he thought, the railway to be carried on by Burdwan to Raniganj, on a course as nearly as possible corresponding with that which might

⁸¹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 30, Governor-General's Minute, 4 July 1850.

⁸² *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to persons in Europe, Dalhousie to Melville, 25 August 1849.

⁸³ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 30, Governor-General's Minute, 4 July 1850.

be selected if the trunkline was to continue by the direct route to Mirzapur.⁸⁴

With Lord Dalhousie's selection of the first experimental line and his sanction for its construction, work was commenced in India in September 1850. Thus, an idea that lingered on for many years, received its shape in the third year of Dalhousie's administration. "We are bringing into the world here a Railway", said Dalhousie expressing his fears and hopes, "something—no child of mine—which, if it prove better than an absolute abortion, will only have one leg, or be otherwise incapable of sustaining itself. However, I will do my best for it, and shall be glad if in my time I hear its first whistle."⁸⁵

Slowly but gradually an opinion was being created in India in favour of the railway movement. The newspapers played a prominent part in creating public opinion in its favour. Slackness or delay on the part of railway companies or the government invited adverse comments. The authorities at Home were most of the time alert against such opinion and sometime were rather sensitive. In May 1850, Hobhouse said to Dalhousie, "There is a strange rumour in your Indian newspapers respecting the Bengal Railway which is said to have been altogether abandoned. But nothing is known of this at the India House, and I conclude it is nonsense."⁸⁶ But the persistent rumours again led the President to say:

"I am much vexed to see in the Bengal newspapers that the Railway concerns are likely to come to a stand-

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to persons in Europe, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Glyn, 6 July 1850.

⁸⁶ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 24 May 1850.

still,—if they have not already stopped. It is quite out of the question for the Government to give more encouragement than they have given; and if the managers on the spot have thrown everything into confusion, it is no fault of our's. Our error, if we have erred, is that we have given too much assistance, and not left the work to private enterprise. It would have been far better, either not to interfere at all, or to have taken the whole upon ourselves, and left it to your Government to plan, execute, and conduct the Railway and everything connected with it.”⁸⁷

“There is not, and never has been”, replied Dalhousie, “the slightest foundation for it. That it is not farther advanced is the fault of the Railway people, who chose to remain in England till the end of the working season instead of proceeding to India at its commencement, arriving in May instead of October last. Whatever the Government could do to advance it has been done. The arrangements for transfer of land have been made, contracts have been entered into, and the answer from home on the points I referred will be here very long indeed before the Company is ready to act on it.”⁸⁸ The Governor-General emphasised that if anywhere anything would go wrong it would not be for want of exertions on the part of his Government, and requested Hobhouse, “Whatever you see in Indian newspapers pray lend no ear to assertions as to difficulties, delays or objections. None exist, at least none but what nature has put there, not the Government.”⁸⁹ However much justified the government or the

⁸⁷ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 859, fos. 314-15, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 22 August 1850.

⁸⁸ *Add. MSS.* 36477, fos. 280-1, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, October 1850.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

companies were the newspapers did not abstain from criticising.*

To expedite the work with efficiency, Lord Dalhousie obtained in August 1850, the appointment of Major J. P. Kennedy as the government railway engineer, on £2500 a year. Kennedy was the military secretary to Sir Charles Napier, the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Dalhousie and Sir Charles did not see eye to eye and the quarrel between them finally ended in the resignation of Sir Charles. Yet Dalhousie secured the appointment of Kennedy knowing, as he did, that "That ought to be a scuttleful of hot coals on His Excellency's (Napier's) head."⁹⁰ But he said, "Not that I asked for the appointment on that account, but solely because I believe Kennedy to be excellently qualified for the office. Thinking so, I should ask for him again, although the Bengal Engineers, I expect, will revile me savagely, and Sir Charles pursue me not a little less."⁹¹ But Kennedy, though appointed, could not serve long.

* Below is a specimen of how the newspapers commented on railway work in India.

"Is, then, the wonder-working power of steam to be denied to India? . . . Are the inexhaustible resources of India to remain undeveloped? Her fields, capable of producing three harvests in the year, to remain untilled? Her wondrous commerce still to be impeded, from the want of roads? Are the valuable products of her remote hills, valleys and plains — comprising everything that administer to the wants or the luxury of man,—to be allowed to rot on the ground which nourished them, by being denied egress to an ocean outlet? . . . In a word, are we, then, to neglect the amelioration of the people of India, . . . month after month, and year after year, because companies, launched in the year of railway madness (1845), with wild gigantic and difficult designs, cannot, in more sober times, meet with sufficient support to carry out fragments of schemes, which do not even pretend to be based on utility to the Government, or advantage to the public?" *Indian News*, 1 July 1850.

⁹⁰ *P.L.*, p. 142.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

He had "some awkward warnings", and was "obliged by 'The Sun' to resign". When the Governor-General heard this from him, he was deeply and sincerely grieved for his health and said, "He is a grievous loss to the Government for he would have effected an infinity of good for us by his energy and experience, and we groan over the loss accordingly."⁹² Anyway, though Major Kennedy resigned the office of the consulting engineer to the Government of India, he rendered his services to the cause of Indian railways in another capacity. He became the consulting engineer to the Bombay and Baroda Railway Company and after his return from India in 1851, prepared a memorandum on a general system of railways for India, which gave valuable informations, statistics, and suggestions to the promoters of railways as well as to the Indian Government and the Home authorities.

The views which Dalhousie had expressed in his minute of 1850, proposing for a line of railway from Howrah on the right bank of the Hooghly to the coal fields at or near Raniganj etc. were accepted by the Court of Directors but objected to by the Board of Control. The Board's objection implied 'a censure on the Governor-General for having overlooked the proceedings of 1845-46.'⁹³ On the other hand, the Court was convinced that there was no proof of this oversight because Dalhousie had the report of F. W. Simms before him and the opinions expressed therein were so strong and decisive against the left bank of the river route, that Simms almost treated the opinion in its favour with ridicule. In these circumstances the Governor-General

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 852, f. 163, Shepherd to Hobhouse, 27 November 1850.

thought it altogether unnecessary to entertain the propositions made five years before, under very different conditions.⁹⁴ So the Court requested Hobhouse to modify the terms in the way it suggested and Hobhouse agreed to it. Thereupon the Court wrote to India, "The Governor-General when expressing this opinion does not advert to the proceedings of 1845-46, or to the report then made, recommending the route by the left bank of the River, but we have no doubt that these proceedings had his Lordship's full consideration. Had we less reliance on the judgment of His Lordship in such matters, we might hesitate between the two plans. As it is, we are prepared to give our assent to that now proposed by the Governor-General. Under all the circumstances we consider the line recommended above to be a very judicious selection, and we give our concurrence to its being constructed in the manner proposed."⁹⁵ The Court also accepted Lord Dalhousie's decision about the broad gauge system for India. A previous suggestion for 4 feet 8 inches was abandoned and a wider gauge, 5 feet 6 inches, was fixed upon.

The ceremony of turning the first sod of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway took place on the last day of October 1850. A large number of people gathered as spectators, and a great interest was marked among the public. One Bomanjee Hormusjee was the owner of a good deal of land over which the line passed, near Sion and Coorla, and it afforded much pleasure to others that that public spirited gentleman gave land and some materials for the railway gratis, on condition only of being compensated for the damage to his salt-pans, by the

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Railway Despatches*, vol. i, pp. 49-51, Financial Letter to India, 4 December 1850.

line being carried over them. It was hoped that many other gentlemen might be found to follow Bomanjee's excellent example.⁹⁶ The occasion was hailed with pleasure and the *Friend of India* said, "...the first sod of the first railway in India was turned up at that Presidency (Bombay) on Wednesday the 31st of October, a day ever to be had in bright remembrance".⁹⁷ At the beginning of 1851, the experimental lines were under construction both in Bengal and Bombay. In Bengal the first twenty-five miles of the line from Howrah to a place in the neighbourhood of Hooghly and the next fifteen miles terminating near the village of Pundooah were worked upon. Moreover, by this time an extension of the railway from Pundooah westwards through Burdwan into the Damodar coalfield had been recommended by the Governor-General.⁹⁸ Connected with the introduction of railways into the above mentioned areas the British authorities by this time were seriously considering the subject of the manufacture of iron. They desired to take every opportunity to open this source of manufacturing industry with the coming of railways. The localities which were represented as the most eligible for carrying on iron works were Seekree Gali near Rajmahal, the banks of the Damodar river and Birbhum.⁹⁹ In Bombay a railway was being constructed which commenced at Bombay and proceeded towards the Ghats by way of Kalyan. The first section of this line was intended to terminate near Kalyan, a distance of forty miles. By

⁹⁶ *Telegraph and Courier*, 1 November 1850.

⁹⁷ *Friend of India*, 17 January 1851.

⁹⁸ *R.H.C.*, no. 3, Letter to E. I. R. Co., 3 January 1851.

⁹⁹ *Railway Despatches*, vol. i, Public letter to Governor-General of India, 11 December 1850.

this time directions had also been given for making surveys, in order to enable the authorities to determine what direction the second section line should take, and what should be its proposed termination.¹⁰⁰ It was only in the presidency of Madras that the work could not begin, and to the annoyance of Hobhouse, he saw Henry Pottinger, the Governor, as having "nothing to do at Madras, except to preside at meetings at which the Board of Control is abused for not extending the Railway guarantee to his Presidency." For this "misdeed" Pottinger was administered "a slight reproof."¹⁰¹

From the beginning the management and control of the experimental lines proved to be excellent. The London 'Times' commented within a few months of its working, "After having passed an ordeal of unusual severity and disheartening duration, the East India Railway at length promises, to be quite a model undertaking in management and conduct."¹⁰² Major Kennedy gave testimony 'to the beneficial results of the present system of management' and entertained high hopes 'as to the cheap rate at which Railways may be constructed in India.'¹⁰³ Dalhousie expressed his hope, too, that "whatever may have been past difficulties, there will hereafter be nothing to prevent the extension of Railways through Upper India by the Company on easier terms than those which govern their experimental lines."¹⁰⁴ The Governor-General had realised from the beginning that the reference of everything to the

¹⁰⁰ *P.P., H.C.*, 1851, vol. 41, pap. no. 622, p. 209.

¹⁰¹ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 859, f. 319, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 7 September 1850.

¹⁰² *Times* quoted in *Indian News*, 27 September 1849.

¹⁰³ *Vide Railway Despatches*, vol. i, p. 108, 20 August 1851.

¹⁰⁴ *Railway Despatches*, vol. i, p. 224, Extract from Dalhousie's Minute, 11 April 1851.

authorities in England obviously delayed the progress almost on each stage, and sometimes he felt of the orders of the Court being too restrictive. On this, the President assured him, "...the latitude you require—will be granted."¹⁰⁵ "For my part", he said, "I have always regretted that the Home authorities originally took so much of the detailed management upon themselves. I wish the whole, or nearly the whole, of the arrangements had been left to your government. Time, money, and blunder would have been saved had that been the course."¹⁰⁶ The Governor-General was justified in his desire to have more and more power into his hands on railway matters. Because, for delay or slow management caused by others, it was he who had to bear the main burden of criticism. He was too sensitive to any adverse opinion from whatever quarter and was seldom prepared to tolerate them. In February 1851, the 'Indian News' wrote:

"We had thought that when Lord Dalhousie went to India, railway improvements were to be the distinguishing characteristics of his reign, but the want of railway progress appears more likely to mark that epoch. The most prominent feature of his rule has hitherto been a variety of picnic peregrinations, with a retinue which the Indian papers assure us has devastated the land like a swarm of locusts. His Government, like that of Timour the Tartar, has been peripatetic; and, like the Calcutta railway, on roads which as yet lead to nowhere....In our opinion, the most beneficial service which Lord Dalhousie could render India would be to

¹⁰⁵ D.P., Letters from Board of Control, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 7 September 1850.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 November 1850.

come home again, and thus give place to some more energetic man."¹⁰⁷

Such comments were not lacking from other sources as well. To escape from them and avoid delay Dalhousie needed a free hand for himself. In course of time the Court of Directors appreciated and concurred with the view of Dalhousie that it was unnecessary and undesirable that the progress of work in India should be subjected to delays by frequent references to England and agreed that the decisions which Dalhousie adopted should be maintained.¹⁰⁸ It was decided that only on occasional cases, where it was highly expedient that the opinion of some eminent engineer in England be taken, the matter might be referred.

At the beginning of 1852 the authorities were anxious to settle the question of the Madras railway.¹⁰⁹ The Court thought for the time that the work "be executed by the East India Company itself." But J. C. Harris, who succeeded Hobhouse in the India Board, could not agree with the directors on this point. He preferred the contract system as in the case of other lines and said to Dalhousie, "The great advantage of inducing the investment of British capital and the application of British enterprise to Indian improvements, taken in conjunction with the apparently successful progress (hitherto) of the contract system in the construction of the Bombay and Bengal railways, induced me to overrule the resolution of the Court of Directors in favour

¹⁰⁷ *Indian News*, 4 February 1851.

¹⁰⁸ *Railway Despatches*, vol. i, p. 145, Financial Despatch to India, 7 January 1852.

¹⁰⁹ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 852, f. 253, Shepherd to Hobhouse, 29 January 1852.

of the other course.”¹¹⁰ This resulted in a private company getting sanction to open an experimental line in Madras. In the other two presidencies the experimental lines were nearing their completion. In the meantime, the chief engineer of the East India Railway Company, George Turnbull, and the government consulting engineer, Major W. E. Baker, were busy in surveying the route for the extension of the Bengal line, and while sanctioning this extension, the Court left it to Dalhousie to determine the precise course of the line.¹¹¹

On 14 September 1852, J. P. Kennedy submitted his memorandum on the Indian railways. He had an ambitious project, his report was long and it elaborately dealt with many aspects of the proposed schemes. He suggested that “with a view to prevent unnecessary delay....the Governor-General should be furnished with a power, if he does not already possess it, without reference home, to incur the requisite expenditure, to investigate by reconnaissance or survey, or by reports from special officers, the merits of such railway projects as his Lordship may think fit to order.”¹¹² Kennedy paid a glowing tribute to Lord Dalhousie’s zeal and experience in railway affairs and reminded the authorities about “the advantage of having as many projects of this nature as possible now brought up, as there is no chance of any one hereafter being placed at the head of the local Government of India, whose experience on the subject of railways could attach such value to their

¹¹⁰ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Harris to Dalhousie, 24 July 1852.

¹¹¹ *Railway Despatches*, vol. i, p. 213, Financial Letter to Governor-General-in-Council, 8 September 1852.

¹¹² *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1854, vol. 48, pap. no. 131, p. 13, Report of Major Kennedy, 14 September 1852.

recommendations or decisions as that of the present Governor-General."¹¹³ In England while the railways were first constructed, many errors were committed, resulting in immense loss and complication. Kennedy hoped that India might escape from the English errors. He warned that much time had already been lost in giving India the advantages of railways and therefore utmost exertions were needed for construction of lines in order that India's productions might be stimulated and enabled to compete with those of other countries, and particularly of America, in the general markets. Kennedy's report gave a stimulus to the considerations of the Court and its confidence in Dalhousie was further strengthened. The Court, while forwarding a copy of Kennedy's 'memoir' for consideration of the Governor-General, requested him for his decision upon the future direction of the Indian lines.¹¹⁴

Towards the close of the year a small part of the Bombay experimental line was completed, and though not officially opened, yet, "the first Railway Passenger train ever started in India, left Bombay at 12 o'clock on the 18th November for Tannah, a distance of eighteen miles."¹¹⁵ There was justice in a comment of the London 'Times' that "the line which it cost the Court of Directors eight years to sanction, will have been completed in less than twenty months from the commencement of operations in earnest."¹¹⁶

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Vide Railway Despatches*, vol. i, p. 220.

¹¹⁵ *Friend of India*, 2 December 1852.

¹¹⁶ *Times* quoted in *Friend of India*, 2 December 1852.

CHAPTER III

The Beginning of the Indian Railways

PART II

The year 1853 may be regarded as an important year in the history of the Indian railways. Sir Charles Wood had become the President of the India Board and took much interest in railway affairs. In January 1853 he wrote to the Governor-General,

“There is another subject under reference to you, and on which you are great authority. I mean the Railways of India. I am not quite satisfied as to the position of things, and we ought in India to take care that they are constructed upon a general plan. I should not object to their being made piecemeal and in different places, provided each separate part formed a portion of a general plan. I hope before long that we shall hear from you at length on this subject.”¹

In reply Dalhousie assured Wood,

“The question of Indian Railways on which you dwell has already received and is receiving my closest attention. But...the question is in itself of such vast importance, that I am desirous of examining and considering it most maturely before giving a final opinion. I will not delay unduly a day.”²

¹ D.P., Letters from Board of Control, Wood to Dalhousie, 22 January 1853.

² D.P., Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 5 March 1853.

In the meantime, of the two experimental lines then in progress, the Bombay line was completed in the spring of 1853. On 15 April, the Board of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway approved of all the arrangements proposed for the opening of the line for passenger traffic,³ and the first section of this line, "which was the first line of railway employed for public traffic in India, was opened on 16th April 1853".⁴ This line, too, was the first railway ever completed in Asia.⁵ The opening ceremony was befitting to the occasion. The concourse of spectators was enormous. According to local accounts, hundreds of thousands of people were gathered together; every house top, every elevation, and almost every tree along the first portion of the line was occupied, "and the expression of wondering excitement upon every face appears to have struck all present." The train reached Thana, a distance of 21 miles in 58 minutes without any accident. The return to Bombay was effected without accident, and late as it was, the sides of the line were still occupied by a crowd of spectators who cheered the train as it passed.⁶ "This being the inauguration of Railways in India", said the directors of the railway company, "the public generally will unite with the Proprietors in congratulations upon the event which may be expected to form the commencement of a new era in India, and lead to incalculable benefits in all the relations not only between Great Britain and her Eastern Empire, but between the different provinces of India itself." The

³ *R.H.C.*, no. 5, Letter from G. I. P. Railway, 15 April, 1853.

⁴ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 17.

⁵ *Friend of India*, 28 April 1853.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *R.H.C.*, no. 5, Report of G.I.P.R., 27 April 1853.

works of several contracts between Thana and Kalyan were proceeding satisfactorily and the Company hoped to make the line ready for traffic by the end of the year.

With the opening of the Bombay-Thana line ended the period of experiments and only four days afterwards, Lord Dalhousie issued his great railway minute. It is evident from his papers that for a considerable time he remained busy in giving his most earnest consideration to the railway question and finally brought out a well thought out scheme. It is also evident that several factors dominated the mind of the Governor-General while he thought of the railways. Few people realised more than Dalhousie the military and commercial advantages of railways. A single glance cast upon the map recalled to his mind the vast extent of the empire the British held; the various classes and interests it included; the wide distances which separated the several points at which hostile attack was at any time expected; the perpetual risk of such hostility appearing in quarters where it was least expected; the expenditure of time, of treasure, and of life, that were involved in even the ordinary routine of military movements over such a tract, and the comparative handful of English men scattered over the surface of the empire, who had been the conquerors of the country, and held it in subjection; a single glance upon these things sufficed to show how immeasurable were the political advantages to be derived from a system of internal communication which was to admit of full intelligence of every event being transmitted to the Government under all circumstances, at a speed exceeding five-fold the then existing rate; and was to enable the Government to bring the main bulk of its military strength to

bear upon any given point, in as many days as it then required months, and to an extent which at that time was physically impossible.⁸

From commercial point of view, England was calling aloud for the cotton which India produced in some degree, and was expected to produce in plentiful quantity, if only there were provided the fitting means of conveyance for it, from distant plains, to the several ports suitable for its shipment. Besides, it was felt that every increase of facilities for trade had been attended with an increased demand for articles of European produce in the most distant markets of India. Dalhousie was led to the conclusion that the establishment of a system of railways in India, judiciously selected and formed, would surely and rapidly give rise within the empire, to the same encouragement of enterprise, the same multiplication of produce, the same discovery of latent resource, to the same increase of national wealth, and to some similar progress in social improvements, that had marked the introduction of improved and extended communication in various kingdoms of the Western World.⁹

The question was, how vast should the scheme of railways be. To Dalhousie, the limited sections of experimental line which had up to that time been sanctioned by the Honourable Court were no longer to form the standard for railway works in India, but that those were to be undertaken upon a scale proportional to the extent of the British dominions in the East, and to the immediate benefits they were calculated to produce. The mechanical practicability of constructing railways

⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 50, Dalhousie's Railway Minute, 20 April 1853.

⁹ *Ibid.*

in India needed no further experiment for its establishment. The working of the experimental line proved that the fears entertained in past about the dangers such as rains and inundations, violent winds, influence of vertical sun, ravages of insects and vermins upon timber and earthwork, destructive effect of the spontaneous vegetation, the unenclosed and unprotected tracts of country etc. were baseless; and the Governor-General said, "If there are difficulties in India from which railway works in Europe and America are free, India is exempt, on her part, from many great impediments to which those countries are subject. If there are still doubts and difficulties here, which the soil or season of India create, it may now be assumed with confidence that there are none which the skill and experience of those who are charged with the undertaking will not be able to master."¹⁰ He had before him reports of several engineers on various questions relating to railways. The advice of such men as Major Baker, Major Pears, and Captain Crawford, who were the government consulting engineers in charge of the three presidencies, Bengal, Madras and Bombay respectively,¹¹ proved very valuable to the Governor-General. After taking their well considered opinion, Dalhousie took upon himself the responsibility of advocating the construction of an extensive system of railways in India, and encouraged the promoters saying that "the lines when fully established will, if prudently and well constructed, be remunerative to those by whom they may have been constructed."

It is interesting to note here the opinions of two

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *P.P., H.C.*, 1852-53, vol. 76, pap. no. 787, p. 2.

of his predecessors on this question. When Stephenson sent his reports in 1846 about the proposed railways in India to the Earl of Ellenborough in Britain, the Earl said, "I have always, when asked what I thought of the prospects of Railways in India, expressed my conviction that they could not be remunerative from the ordinary sources of Railway revenue."¹² Lord Hardinge, the immediate predecessor of Dalhousie, while recommending that the railways would "have an immense effect in facilitating the means of governing the country, by rapid transmission of troops, as well as of instructions from the seat of Government", could not but apprehend that "when made it will barely pay its annual expense in machinery, fuel and superintendence."¹³ Dalhousie held quite opposite views. From the point of profit, railways in India always seemed to him a most alluring concern. He was never diffident about this.

The several questions treated in the Governor-General's Minute of the 20th April, 1853, were as follows:

1. The question of a general system of Railway for India.
2. The lines required in the Presidency of Bengal.
3. The lines proposed and required in the Presidency of Bombay.
4. The lines projected or desirable for the Presidency of Madras.
5. The agency by which the lines should severally be constructed.

¹² *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 844, fos. 284-86, *vide* Ellenborough to Hobhouse, 25 December 1846.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 853, *vide* Hardinge to Hobhouse, 3 January 1847.

6. The general principles which were to be observed in the construction of them; and
7. The particular companies which sought permission to undertake them.¹⁴

The Governor-General dealt on the above points elaborately. The following were some of his recommendations in brief.

1. That a general system of railways connecting the several presidencies, and constituting the great trunk lines within them, should be sanctioned and executed without further delay.
2. That the trunk line in the Presidency of Bengal should be carried up the valley of the Ganges to Allahabad, and thence up the Doab to Agra and Delhi, with a view to its being extended through the Punjab westward, as soon as its construction might be found practicable, and that the line to Diamond Harbour should be rejected. This line from Calcutta to Lahore, to put in Dalhousie's words, "will constitute a very noble work, replete with the highest advantages to the Government and to the public."
3. That a junction line should be formed between above-mentioned trunk line and the Presidency of Bombay, either by the valley of the Narbada, or by way of Baroda and Neemuch; but preferably by the latter in the first instance, if further examination should recommend it.
4. That in Bombay the Malsej Ghat line should be abandoned; that the Thal Ghat line should

¹⁴ *P.P., H.C., 1852-53, vol. LXXVI, Letter from Governor-General-in-Council, 4 May 1853.*

not be sanctioned as a great trunk line of communication between Bombay and other parts of India. That a line to Khandesh, and a line to Poona, should both be undertaken.

5. That a line should be formed in the Presidency of Madras by Menil, Vellore, Vaniyambadi, and Coimbatore, and thence to the Western coast, with a branch to Bangalore, and a branch also to the foot of the hills towards Ootacamund.

That another line should be constructed in the Presidency of Madras from that City by Cuddapah to Bellary; and that surveys should be made with a view to its extension across the table-land to Poona, in the Presidency of Bombay, in order thereby to form a junction with the Western coast.

6. That the construction of these lines should be committed to incorporated railway companies under the control of the government in the manner which had been agreed upon in the case of the East Indian Railway Company, and on such terms as might be fixed.¹⁵

The above question, that is, the agency by which the several lines were to be constructed, demanded from Dalhousie his 'best and closest attention', and he, as he said, gave to it 'most earnest and anxious thought', for it was a question of deep importance to the Honourable East India Company, and one upon which differing views were entertained by many. It was contended by some that railways in India should be constructed on behalf of the government by its own officers, who, it was

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

thought, would execute the work with greater economy, efficiency, and speed, than could be done by the agents of a railway company formed in and directed from England. John Hobhouse, as the President of the Board of Control, several times thought that the railways in India be better constructed by the government. Once he said to Lord Hardinge, "After great hesitation and much reluctance I agreed to a guarantee of four per cent. interest.... We have, however, acted for the best; and if this project fails, and you must have a railroad, from Calcutta to the North West Frontier, why, in that case, your Government must undertake it."¹⁶ Hardinge did not favour this suggestion. But the President persisted, "My own inclination is in favour of your Government doing the thing itself."¹⁷

On the other hand, it is evident from the correspondence of the Court of Directors of the East India Company that at first it wanted to entrust the execution of railways to incorporated bodies under its own control, and of late even wanted to construct the lines "by East India Company itself."¹⁸

Dalhousie did not agree with either of the views and applied his own experience gained in England. While dealing with the construction and management of the British railways, he had recommended for the enlistment of private enterprise for the formation of those great works, directly, but not vexatiously controlled by the government of the country, acting in the interests of the public. But it was said that "Sir Robert Peel's

¹⁶ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 853, fos. 192-93, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 7 January 1847.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, fos. 275-76, Hobhouse to Hardinge, 24 February 1847.

¹⁸ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, 24 July 1852.

most unfortunate determination to throw Railways open to unregulated competition, and to reject the prudent advice of Lord Dalhousie to place them under salutary control" cost the country dearly.¹⁹ Later, Dalhousie thought 'without arrogance' that if his "principles had been then more fully recognised, the proprietors of railway property in England, and the suffering public, would have been in a better condition now than they appear to be."²⁰ With past experience he was in a favourable position to decide the future of Indian railways. He did not like the idea of government constructing railways at its own cost. Dalhousie felt that it was very proper that the Government of India should undertake the formation of the Ganges Canal, of irrigation channels, and of tanks in various parts of India. Because those were works which affected the general well-being of the community, or that of particular districts, and which, producing no immediate return, must be executed by the government, if they were to be formed at all. He also felt that the Government of India should have constructed the Great Trunk Road, because there was nobody else to do such things, and because the government stood in various relations to local interests in India. But about railways he said,

"But the conduct of an enterprise which is undertaken mainly for commercial purposes, and which private parties are willing to engage for, does not fall within the proper functions of any Government."²¹

But while entrusting the works to private companies, he did not want to leave them either to their own

¹⁹ *Times* quoted in *Friend of India*, 6 July 1854.

²⁰ *P.P., H.C.*, 1852-53, vol. 76, pap. no. 787, p. 134.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

management as in England then, or to a vague control to be exercised from the Home country by the Honourable Court as contemplated by the latter. He wanted to place them directly under the eyes of the Government of India, and gave his decided opinion that "the construction of the works by a Railway Company, under the supervision and control of the Government, is the best system which is open for the adoption of the Honourable Court." Experience of the working of the experimental system in Bengal justified his opinion. There, the consulting engineer was placed in direct communication with the railway company, and had authority to settle all matters of detail, or professional questions, and unless they were of great magnitude, without previous reference to the government. Every precaution was taken to obviate delay in those cases in which the action of the Governor-General-in-Council was needed. The method proved successful, and, while the consulting engineer directly and indirectly exercised on behalf of the government a very wholesome control over the proceedings of the railway company, neither obstruction, nor vexation, nor delay, could be justly attributed to the existence of a power of control in the hands of the government. The Bengal principle appeared to Dalhousie as sound, and he proposed to uphold it in the formation of the several lines of railway in India.

Lord Dalhousie concluded his famous minute in the following words:

"I have the honour respectfully to submit these several recommendations to the Honourable Court of Directors, and to express my earnest hope that it will resolve at once to engage in the introduction of a system of railways into the Indian empire upon a scale commensurate with the magnitude of the interests that

are involved, and with the vast and various benefits, political, commercial, and social, which that great measure of public improvement would unquestionably produce."²²

The minute went into all possible details. It practically exhausted the subject, and formed "the text book for all future Railway projects in India."²³ It was said about the minute, "Had it been the work simply of an engineer, statesmen might have cast it aside. Had it been the work only of a statesman, engineers would have been certain to assail it. Fortunately, at the most propitious moment for the execution of a vast design, we have a Governor-General who can in the same Minute point out the precise political results to be expected from success, and smash a crotchety engineer, who hopes to descend a gradient steeper than the Lickey incline, by employing 'the principles of the Atmospheric Railway reversed'. The President of the Railway department of the Board of Trade, has become Governor-General of India. That the opinion of Lord Dalhousie is an easy phrase, and it has been, and will be, sufficient to control the Home Authorities, inquisitive shareholders, dissentient Directors, and Lord Jocelyn."²⁴ About the minute Dalhousie noted in his diary : "I have sent home a ponderous minute on Railways....The measure I have advocated is large and bold, but it is at the same time, I believe, wise and safe, and I earnestly hope the Court may be induced to adopt it. If the Court should do so it will confer upon India the greatest boon she has ever received from the power of

²² *P.P., H.C.*, 1852-53, vol. 76, pap. no. 787, Dalhousie's Minute, 20 April 1853.

²³ *Friend of India*, 8 September 1853.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 September 1853.

England.”²⁵ In a private letter to the Chairman of the Court of Directors, he expressed his hope that the Court and the Government should “go boldly into the whole scheme” submitted by him.²⁶

The despatch of Dalhousie was put before the Court of Directors, and the Court derived great satisfaction from the perusal of that “very able, lucid, and comprehensive Minute”. “We entirely concur with his Lordship”, said the directors, “that the magnitude and importance of the question can hardly be over stated and . . . we cannot but attach the greatest weight to the recommendations which, with his intimate acquaintance with the subject, and his great opportunities of obtaining local information, he is so eminently qualified to offer.”²⁷ The Court came to the decision that a general system of railways connecting several presidencies and constituting the great trunk lines within them, should be sanctioned and executed without delay.²⁸ The Board of Control, too, accepted the scheme of the Governor-General in full, and Sir Charles Wood, according to him, lost no time in carrying out the views of Lord Dalhousie.²⁹

Wood came forward to support Dalhousie’s railway programme for two main reasons. He wanted to satisfy ‘a large and powerful party’ in England which wanted railway to be constructed in India on a wide scale. Several members of the British Parliament were

²⁵ *Dalhousie’s Diary*, 1853, part i, 8 May 1853.

²⁶ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. ii, 5 May 1853.

²⁷ *Vide Railway Despatches*, vol. i, p. 315, Financial Despatch to Governor-General-in-Council, 17 August 1853.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 315-33.

²⁹ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Wood to Dalhousie, 25 July 1853.

directly or indirectly the sponsors and supporters of railway companies whose opinion Wood could not ignore. The British capitalists who financed the Indian railways as share-holders had a powerful voice in their country. The other reason why he was anxious to push forward the rail roads was to draw cotton from India for British industries. As time advanced and railway works began to progress, the Manchester people became more and more restless and impatient. The Wood papers show that as President he became more interested in Bombay railways to open the cotton growing districts. In April 1853 Wood wrote to Dalhousie,

“I think that if we could draw a larger supply of cotton from India it would be a great national object. . . . It is not a comfortable thing to be so entirely dependent on the United States. I do not see much prospect of supply from other places. They are doing very little in the West Indies. Natal is not very promising, and India valley is the only place from whence we can look for any large amount. If we had the Bombay Railway carried into the cotton country it would be the great work which Government is capable of performing with a view to this end.”³⁰

Within a few days Wood again complained to Dalhousie,

“...as you know regard for material interests is the ruling passion of the day, and we have a great storm about cotton of inferior growth, the old fashioned conveyance on bullock backs etc., etc. There is some truth in all this although our goahead people are quite incapable of comprehending that quiet Hindoos cannot

³⁰ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iii. f. 52, Wood to Dalhousie, 8 April 1853.

be made to go the pace of a Manchester manufacturer or Yankee speculator."³¹

Keeping above considerations in view Sir Charles Wood threw his full weight in favour of railways. The very able minute of the Governor-General naturally called for his great interest and he began to work at Home in support of the scheme.³²

When the recommendations and views of Lord Dalhousie, as expressed in his despatch, became public, the railway companies and the British capitalists felt greatly encouraged to take up programmes of extensive railways in India. The directors of the East India Railway understood that the government had recommended a considerable extension of the line towards the North West and intimated "their readiness at once to make arrangements for the completion of the line to Delhi."³³ The promoters of a new company, the Upper India Railway, informed the Court that they were prepared to tender for the line from Allahabad to Delhi or from Allahabad to Peshawar.³⁴ The Board of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway showed its readiness to proceed at once with the construction of two divergent sections, one to Khandesh and another to Poona.³⁵ The Madras Railway Company, which was then at work on a section of experimental line from Madras to Menil, informed the Court that it was ready to undertake the execution of all the lines proposed for the presidency and to proceed, if desired, with their construction

³¹ *Ibid.*, fos. 62-4, Wood to Dalhousie, 25 April 1853.

³² *Ibid.*, f. 126.

³³ *R.H.C.*, no. 5, Letter from E. I. R. Co., 28 June 1853.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter from Upper India Railway Co., 5 July 1853.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter from G. I. P. R. Co., 22 July 1853.

simultaneously.³⁶ The chairman of another new company, the Baroda and Central Indian Railway, said, "In reference to the recommendation of the Supreme Government of India that a survey should be immediately prepared of the line projected by this company, I am directed to request that the Hon'ble Court would adopt our Company as the agency for obtaining the survey required."³⁷ The petitions from so many companies put the Court into a difficult position, because the Court was not willing to guarantee $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest to so many of them. But, as Wood put it, "all the great authorities told them that they could not get out the shares for less."³⁸ Under such circumstances the Court agreed, and Wood wrote to Dalhousie, "Your minute on Railroads has given us all a fresh start, and we will endeavour to push them forward."³⁹

The proposals of the Governor-General received the Court's sanction on 17 August 1853. Within a few days the directors ordered the Madras Government to construct the railway as far as Menil, and said that, that line was evidently best suited for the commencement of a trunk road either in a north-westerly or south-westerly direction.⁴⁰ In a similar order to Bombay the Court sanctioned the construction, by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company, of the extensions of the line from Thana.⁴¹ About railways in Bengal and Upper India, an amalgamation was effected between the East India and the Upper Indian Railway Companies

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Letter from Madras Railway Co., 25 July 1853.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter from Baroda & Central India Railway, 25 July 1853.

³⁸ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iii, f. 176, Wood to Dalhousie, 19 August 1853.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Railway Despatches*, vol. i, p. 335, Despatch to Madras, 7 September 1853.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 343, Despatch to Bombay, 14 September 1853.

and the United Company undertook to construct the line to Delhi within a period of seven years. This work was to commence in various parts simultancously.⁴² The Court desired that the line through the Doab from Allahabad to Delhi should be proceeded with as soon as practicable. By December 1853, the question of opening the first 42 miles of the Bengal line was discussed and the Court in accordance with the recommendation of the government, asked the railway directors to make the necessary preparation for opening this section forthwith.⁴³

In the meantime, the twenty-one mile long Bombay-Thana line which had been opened to traffic for some months showed very good prospects. The accounts of the receipts and expenditure for the last six months of 1853 showed that the expenses amounted to only 46 per cent. of the receipts, and the surplus was equal to within a fraction of 4 per cent. per annum on the total outlay. Thus it was said, "the first railway made in India, without a terminus, and without reaching any important centre of trade" returned 4 per cent. from the passengers alone. In the beginning of 1854, more than twelve hundred passengers were travelling on that small line every day. In a year from its opening, upwards of 450,000 passengers had been conveyed upon the line.⁴⁴ One may recollect here the gloomy foreboding of Lord Ellenborough who declared in 1846, "My belief is certainly that there will be no such surplus receipts, that the gross receipts will hardly defray the annual wear and tear and working expenses, but it will be long before

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 344-50, Despatch to Government of India, 5 October 1853.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 365-66, Despatch to Government of India, 7 December 1853.

⁴⁴ *Indian News*, 14 June 1854.

sanguine speculators will come to this conclusion.”⁴⁵ Before the rail in India was opened there were people who “confidently affirmed that the natives of the country were so poor and destitute, and at the same time so fossilised in their habits of thought and action” that they would hardly avail themselves of the rail as a means of conveyance.⁴⁶ Many among the early promoters of railways, while counting the possibilities of tremendous profit from transaction of goods, hardly took into account income from passenger traffic. But all such early misapprehensions proved to be baseless. It goes to the credit of Lord Dalhousie to have gathered information and said in his minute of April 1853:

“And all the engineers have distinctly stated in their several reports, up to the most recent which Major Baker has submitted, that their constant communications with the natives, with whom they are brought in contact along the country which is to be traversed by the lines, have satisfied them, not only that the natives will gladly use the railways for the conveyance of their goods, but that they will have no scruple in availing themselves of them as passengers, if only the rate of fare paid shall render the carriage available to them.”⁴⁷

The working of the Bombay line justified his views.

For a few months at the beginning of 1854 the prospects of the Crimean War made the money market dull in the United Kingdom and it affected the Indian railways adversely. Sir Charles Wood saw that people were unwilling to go into the railroads even with the guaranteed interest. He became afraid that there

⁴⁵ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 844, fos. 284-86.

⁴⁶ *Vide Indian News*, 17 July 1855.

⁴⁷ *P.P., H.C.*, 1852-53, vol. 76, pap. no. 787, Dalhousie's Minute, 20 April 1853.

would be great difficulty in the existing state of things in obtaining money and refused to sanction the immediate construction of some of the branch lines with a view to forward the main trunk lines, and not to be diverted from them.⁴⁸ By April, the question of railroads had become 'very serious' because it did not "seem likely that money will be forthcoming to take up shares, pay up instalments, and carry on the works." For a time, Wood thought of forcing the companies to go on because he believed that they had enough money for that year. But this step he desired to take only in the extremity of need, though on the other hand he assured the Indian Government, "I will not see the great lines fail for want of assistance in some shape". He was much worried that "the war, and the foreign loans have utterly changed the face of all things."⁴⁹

Though the money market did not allow the railway companies to take up new lines, they did not stop the works already begun. The Court was satisfied at the rapid progress of works in Madras and wanted to despatch material from England as much as possible, "in order to second the endeavour of the authorities in India to complete portions of the line, so as to commence the traffic at an early period."⁵⁰ The Madras Railway Company was anxious in the first instance to complete the line from Madras to Vaniyambadi, a distance of 120 miles, because on that portion of the line the traffic was already considerable, and there was little doubt of its rapid increase with the facilities and encouragement which the railway was supposed to afford.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iv, pp. 240-42, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 March 1854.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 262-63, Wood to Dalhousie, 8 April 1854.

⁵⁰ *R.H.C.*, no. 6, Letter from Madras Railway Co., 13 March 1854.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

The first section of the Bengal line, by this time, was complete. Charles Wood, who was now at his wit's end for money wanted to open this line forthwith, and said to Dalhousie, "I wish you could try the effect of opening as much as you can. The one at Bombay has answered very well, and the profits have been reasonable. I am in hopes that you might get some shares taken at Calcutta, if the people saw the trains running and began to take interest in it. Our War, and in part Gladstone's financial matters have put our money market into such a state that we really cannot at all calculate on how things will go on. In your settled and tranquil state money may perhaps be forthcoming."⁵²

On 27 June 1854, the train began to run on the Bengal line, and a day after, Dalhousie expressed his joy in a letter to his friend George Couper. "Yesterday the first locomotive travelled 40 miles and back on our line here. By the end of the year 120 miles will be opened."⁵³ On 15 July, this line from Howrah to Pundooah was opened for the traffic.⁵⁴ This was the second railway line opened in India and the people received it with the 'greatest excitement'. A few days later, Dalhousie again said to Couper,

"On the 15th the Railway started most successfully. It has already solved one important problem. Many doubted whether the natives would go on a railway, partly, from timidity, partly from prejudice. The Bombay Railway cleared up the doubt as to the Western population, but still people doubted as to the Bengalees. However, the railway has been crowded for these three

⁵² *W.P., L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 92-4, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 May 1854.

⁵³ *P.L.*, p. 307.

⁵⁴ *R.H.C.*, no. 7, *vide* 16th Report of E. I. R. Co., 10 August 1854.

days by Calcutta Baboos. It is engaged thousands deep, and they are in the greatest excitement about it, many going even on the tender rather than not go.”⁵⁵

There were no first class carriages and the train ran only with the second and third class carriages. One of Dalhousie’s own aides, who went up by it one day, told the Governor-General that many people who had first class tickets, but for whom there was no room in the train, went on the tender rather than not go.⁵⁶ Dalhousie was anxious to open the line beyond Pundooah as early as possible and complained against the railway company for their delay. He wrote to Wood, “We have not the means; and it is the neglect of the Company at home that we have not. Long long ago they were asked to send locomotives and specimen carriages. On the poor pretext that they could not get freight no locomotive was sent until very recently. No pattern-carriage has been sent at all; and they are now making them up here as they best can for paper drawings. One locomotive and a carriage has been got up and runs occasionally over the line to Pundooah, 38 miles.”⁵⁷ Wood by this time (July 1854) had overcome the financial difficulty facing the railway companies by having “raised a million on debentures at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.”, but he, too, like Dalhousie, was “out of patience with this East India railroad.” “I cannot after taking a great deal of pains find out anything wrong anywhere”, said Wood, “and yet there seems to be a very general impression that somehow or another they do not manage

⁵⁵ *P.L.*, p. 314.

⁵⁶ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, *vide* Dalhousie to Wood, 18 August 1854.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 13 July 1854.

their affairs well.”⁵⁸ With such impression in his mind and having “no idea of guaranteeing permanently a higher rate of interest for the railway capital”, Wood, like Hobhouse before him, began to entertain the idea of constructing railways by the government. Accordingly he suggested to the Governor-General, “. . . you have done the electric telegraph so well that I am more confident of this railroad being fairly executed by Government.”⁵⁹ But Dalhousie never changed his mind on this issue and therefore the government construction of railways in India did not materialise during his time.

The directors of the East India Railway, however, sped up their work and hoped to open the entire length of the first section of line to Raniganj by the end of 1854.⁶⁰ With confidence in them, the Governor-General sent information to Queen Victoria that “the first great line of railway as yet constructed in India, has been opened to the public. Forty miles are in use from Calcutta northwards, and on the 26th December a line of 120 miles will be ready.”⁶¹ It was time now for the railway companies as well as for the Government of India to look for further extensions. The direction of the line from Burdwan to Allahabad had been previously approved. In June 1854, the line from Allahabad to Cawnpore was sanctioned. The India Board fully approved the railway proceedings of the Government of India, and Sir Charles Wood further wanted to explore the possibility of a line in Sind. Dalhousie was delighted to hear about this line from Karachi to Kotree, and

⁵⁸ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 236-38, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 July 1854.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *R.H.C.*, no. 7, *vide* 16th Report of E. I. R. Co., 10 August 1854.

⁶¹ *D.P.*, no. 397, Letters to Queen, 4 October 1854.

said, "If they will now only improve the port, very feasible, I believe, that will be a great step gained."⁶² It was estimated that in the port of Karachi, the average of the shipping was from 70,000 to 80,000 tons yearly, of which about 30,000 tons were, in 1854, square-rigged vessels. The return of tonnage of country boats passing the stations on the Indus gave an average of 1,565,120 maunds or 55,900 tons, and below Sukkur, of 1,752,200 maunds, or 62,500 tons. The number of laden steamers passing Hyderabad and Kotree was in average 100, with a tonnage of 1,190,000 maunds or 42,500 tons. Besides these, there were the camel traffic. The figures conveyed but a moderate idea of the amount of tonnage which was expected to come on the railway in Sind.⁶³ In October-November, 1854, Dalhousie sent Home the Baroda Railway papers for the consideration of the Court. He was convinced of the necessity and eligibility of a section of line between Bombay and Baroda, and recommended for it. But, "Beyond Baroda", expressed Dalhousie, "all is dark. At present it seems to me most likely to turn out that the most direct line to Hindustan will not be available, and that the junction must be formed by way of the Narbada valley."⁶⁴ In December of the same year, the line from Kanpur to near Agra was sanctioned.⁶⁵

By the end of the year, the line from Calcutta to Raniganj was ready for traffic. Though it had previously been calculated to open this entire line by the end of 1854, a little delay took place, and it was officially

⁶² *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 18 Oct. 1854.

⁶³ *Indian News*, 17 April 1855.

⁶⁴ *D.P.*, Letters to Governors & Lt. Governors, Dalhousie to Elphinstone, 25 October 1854.

⁶⁵ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 16.

opened on 3 February 1855.⁶⁶ Lord Dalhousie opened this line at Howrah in a great ceremony. Seventy miles off from Howrah, at Burdwan, the function was celebrated with great festivities. Though it might have been one of the proudest moments of Dalhousie's Indian career to have attended the function there and proclaimed to India the inauguration of a new age, he could not do so. His health was already ruined by over work and only two days before the ceremony he said to Stephenson,

"I regret very much to be obliged to inform you that I find myself unable to take more than a partial share in the ceremonies of your opening on Saturday next. For some weeks past I have been ill and suffering. I have retained, however, the fullest intention of being present at Burdwan, until today, when my medical adviser forbids the attempt.

"I shall be present at Howrah but I am conscious that I am wholly unfit for the performance of the remainder of the task, which would involve a railway journey of 150 miles—a mid-day banquet—and the addressing of 400 people, under tents in a Bengal Sun."⁶⁷

At Howrah the ceremony was imposing. All the members of the Government and all the magnets of Calcutta were present and a prayer was read by the Bishop.⁶⁸ It was early on Saturday morning, and after the Governor-General had opened the line, the party invited to attend the official inauguration, about a thousand persons, departed, in two trains, for Burd-

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to Various Persons in India, vol. ix, Dalhousie to Stephenson, 1 February 1855.

⁶⁸ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1855.

wan.⁶⁹ A local correspondent wrote, "As we watched it on its way, we could not help feeling that at that moment was secured infinitely more prosperity and progress to India than all the labours of the last quarter of a century with its bloody campaigns, annexations of territory, and tales of conquest, had accomplished."⁷⁰ Steam was already changing the whole face of the earth, and whatever were the moral and natural jungles, so it was said, through which it had to penetrate in India, it was certain that it was to cut its road through the one as the other, and that it was not only to change the character of the people, but also the character of the constitution by which the country was governed. "From its agency", commented an Indian paper, "we look for immense political changes, for great commercial progress, and with the blessing of God for moral, social, and religious progression in this empire which is now the most vast, and may one day become the most mighty, in everything that belongs to real mightiness, in the eastern world."⁷¹

At the end of the ceremony at Howrah Lord Dalhousie returned from the platform "somewhat dejected"⁷² and noted in his diary:

"I stood long enough to witness the departure of the Train and then returned to Government House. It was a grievous mortification to me to be obliged to declare myself, for the first time, unable to perform a duty expected of me."⁷³

The trunk-line from Calcutta to Burdwan, with a

⁶⁹ *Hurkaru*, 8 February 1855

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *P.L.*, pp. 336-37.

⁷³ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1855.

branch to Raniganj, having been opened, more attention was now paid towards the lines in Upper India. On 17 February, the ceremony of turning the first sod in the North West Railway was performed with usual solemnities at Mirzapur.⁷⁴ Beyond Mirzapur, surveys of two alternative lines from Delhi or Agra to Lahore were executed. Additional surveys were authorised from Mirzapur to Jabalpur, and from Kanpur to Bhilsa. In November 1855 the trunk line to Delhi via Agra and Mathura was sanctioned.⁷⁵ In the presidency of Bombay, two railway companies were working for the execution of several lines proposed. The first, the Great Indian Peninsular Railway, had already opened its experimental line, as has been seen earlier, and was making headway in further extension. About the second one, in November 1854, Dalhousie had asked the Court to give its sanction to the line which had been surveyed by Bombay, Baroda, and Central India Railway Company, from Bombay to Baroda and Ahmedabad, and which was intended to form the first section of a trunk-line from the Western Coast of India to Hindoostan.⁷⁶ Of the above proposed line the Court was pleased to approve of the section from Surat to Ahmedabad. In December 1854, the Supreme Government recommended to the Court to give its sanction to a line from Bombay by the Bhore Ghat to Poona, as the first section of the trunk-line from Bombay to Madras. In the autumn of 1855 the Government of India recommended the line from Bombay to Khandesh by way of the Thal Ghat to be sanctioned by the Court as a highly important local line. Simultaneously, the Court was advised to sanction the

⁷⁴ *Friend of India*, 1 March 1855.

⁷⁵ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, pp. 16-18.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

prolongation of the Bombay-Poona line from Poona as far as the river Krishna, where it was intended to meet the trunk-line from Madras.⁷⁷ In the presidency of Madras, all railway works were carried on by the Madras Railway Company. A line from Madras through Vaniyambadi, Salem and Coimbatore to Poonany on the Malabar Coast was sanctioned and the progress of the work was up to the satisfaction of the Governor-General. Sanction was also given to a branch line from Vaniyambadi to Bombay. Attention, too, was directed towards new regions of India where railway talks had lately begun. The Court was informed that a committee of gentlemen were interested in the formation of a railroad in Sind, from Karachi to the Indus. The promoters of this Company said to the Court, "You are well aware of the steps already taken by the Local Government of India, in furtherance of this undertaking, and of the anxiety of Mr. Frere, the Commissioner of Sind, Lieut. Col. Turner, the Superintending Engineer and other Government officers, on the spot, that this railroad should be at once proceeded with, as being not only of Provincial, but of Imperial importance both in political and commercial points of view."⁷⁸ Consequently, the Court sanctioned the construction of a line from Karachi to a point on the Indus to be decided upon, and left it to Dalhousie to determine upon the route in communication with the Bombay Government.⁷⁹

The working of the lines which had been opened to the traffic and upon which the trains ran regularly, encouraged the government greatly. The development

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *R.H.C.*, no. 7, Letter from Sind Railway Co., 9 November 1854.

⁷⁹ *Railway Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 63, Despatch to Government of India, 21 February 1855.

of the third class passenger traffic was the most unexpected, and the most startling result of the establishment of rail. The most sanguine were not prepared for the fact that eight months after the Bengal Rail had been opened and the excitement of novelty had passed off, there would be 12,000 third class passengers a week, and only 100 of the first class. It was a simple question of policy. As was said, "Fortunately, the Rail is under the absolute control of the Government, and will therefore be regulated by that higher principle which belongs to the relation of sovereign and subject; not by the relation of the monopolist and his customers."⁸⁰ The railway returns exhibited a steady and satisfactory increase. In February 1855, on the Bengal line, the total receipts for four weeks were 16,855 rupees; whereas the receipts for the last four weeks in April of the same year were 47,678 rupees. In the accounts of the eye witnesses, there were few things more gratifying to the mind than to stand at the stations and witness the crowds which poured out of the third class carriages as the train arrived, and the crowds which rushed to fill their places. "The fondness for travelling by the rail has become almost a national passion among the inferior orders; and it is producing a social change in the habits of general society far more deep and extensive than any which has been created by the political revolutions of the last twenty centuries."⁸¹ The return from goods increased by many times, and appeared capable of an indefinite expansion, though by the middle of 1855, the rail cannot be said to have touched the vast commercial traffic to and from the North West.

The increased railway works in all parts of India

⁸⁰ *Friend of India*, 17 May 1855.

⁸¹ *Indian News*, 17 July 1855.

demanding greater responsibility from the government. The Court of Directors authorised the Government of India to exercise a vigilant supervision over railway management, and to enforce laws and regulations which might be established for the correction of abuse, and the punishment of neglect with a view to the protection of the public.⁸² With pressure from many quarters, one finds Lord Dalhousie in the middle of 1855, overwhelmed by railway problems, old and new. He said to Couper,

“Of late I have been very hard worked; for after the Oude papers were disposed of, there came some very heavy railway cases. These are very difficult and very responsible tasks in India. The distances to be traversed are so enormous, the cost so heavy, and the consequences of an erroneous judgment so injurious, that it becomes a very onerous duty to decide upon them. At the best, the guides to a determination are few and inadequate. Unlike dealing with the same class of subjects in England you have here to work almost in the dark.”⁸³

Yet Dalhousie was not doubtful of success. He felt “pretty sure of coming to the right conclusion in the end regarding them all”, even though the work was, according to him, “harder, and the execution of it more anxious”.

During the last months of Dalhousie’s administration, the railway programme for India took its final

⁸² *Railway Despatches*, vol. ii, pp. 64-5, Despatch to Government of India, 14 March 1855.

⁸³ *P.L.*, pp. 348-49, 15 July 1855.

Dalhousie also said, “There are rarely competitors to pick holes in each other’s plans, and let in light upon you through the apertures their mutual criticism makes. You have little to guide you but the surveys and your own sense. These difficulties are all aggravated for me at present by my separation from the Engineers and my colleagues, some of whom are very capable of giving assistance.”

shape. His Government finished the examination of the several lines proposed for the trunk railway between Allahabad and Agra,⁸⁴ and sanctioned the immediate commencement of the line from Fatehpur to Agra, touching the stations of Kanpur and Etawah. The Court agreed that the line which Dalhousie sanctioned for the railway through the Doab, from Allahabad to Delhi, was best suited to meet the objects of a trunk-line from Calcutta to the North West Frontier as well as the local requirements of the districts.⁸⁵ The Court also concurred in with the opinion of the Governor-General, that, all branch lines in connection with the trunk-line, ought to be constructed in the same manner as the trunk itself, so as to be fitted to receive locomotive power wherever it might be thought right to employ it.⁸⁶

During the second half of 1855, Dalhousie laid down the code of rules and regulations applicable to all railways throughout India. Railways were rapidly expanding and a uniformity of management was necessary to prevent all inconvenience and misunderstanding. His code was sanctioned with the remark: "The sound practical observations of the Governor-General and the attention which he has given to the most minute questions connected with the management of Indian Railways lead us to hope that every possible measure has been adopted to secure the most advantageous mode of working the extensive system now being introduced."⁸⁷

The control exercised by the Government of India

⁸⁴ *Railway Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 98.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30, Despatch to Government of India, 26 September 1855.

over the railway companies and railway officers did a good deal of service to the people. At times the railway officers went against the interests of the people, and but for the intervention of the government, injustice could not have been remedied. For instance, a great excitement was caused among the people of Patna in consequence of the operations connected with the appropriation of land for railway purposes. People were against the rail authorities for the following causes.

“First, seeing their Houses destroyed without receiving any compensation for them.

“Second, being furnished with a ticket which the Railway authorities supplied to specify the amount of compensation that they were eventually to receive and which amount was wholly inadequate to the value of the property destroyed.

“Third, carrying the line of Railroad through places which were esteemed sacred, and

“Fourth, a vague apprehension which appears to have seized them that for some purpose or other it was intended to cut a network of Railroads all over the town involving the destruction of property in every direction and to an enormous extent.”⁸⁸

Consequent upon this untoward event, the Government of India directed that no land or houses should be appropriated by the Railway Commissioner until an offer of fair compensation had been made and accepted, and that the Railway Company should be held responsible for any encroachment upon, or injury to, property in the preliminary survey for the railway, and also that every effort should be uniformly made to avoid injury

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-85.

to mosques, temples and places held in veneration by any class of community.⁸⁹

At places it was seen that coercion or unfair dealing was practised by the railway company's officers in obtaining labour for the work. The railway officers worked under a false impression that "the Railway being a Government work, might be carried on by compulsory and lowly remunerated labour." Upon enquiry, a certain Mr. Vincent stated in his letter of the 13th May 1855, "it became clearly apparent to me coercion was used." Under circumstances the government had to protect the interests of the people, especially of that class which was dependent upon labour for the means of subsistence, against unauthorised and oppressive proceedings on the part of the railway officers.

Discontent shown by people on such occasions against railway people in no way however proves a popular antipathy towards that new mode of conveyance. On the other hand, it was just the contrary. Everywhere people became railway conscious, and at many places they showed wonderful sympathy towards the concern. Government received petitions from the inhabitants of several districts to open railway in their respective areas. Traffic on the lines increased as the days advanced. These developments were the most satisfactory to the authorities and on occasions they were surprised to see the popular enthusiasm. "The great increase in the numbers", said the astonished directors of the Honourable East India Company, "which is noticeable in the weeks ending the 30th September and 7th October (1854) is explained by the consulting Engineer to have arisen from the Doorga

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Poojah Holidays during which time the resort to the Railway was much greater than had been expected, and on several occasions there was not accommodation for all the applicants.”⁹⁰

Towards the end of 1855 Dalhousie’s health had become very bad. For long he was keeping unwell, and Sir Charles Wood, before he had retired from the India Board to the Admiralty, had once warned the Governor-General, “I am only afraid that your zeal carries you too far, and that you do not allow yourself the recreation or take the exercise which is desirable for your health. On the most utilitarian principles you ought to keep yourself in the most perfect working condition.”⁹¹ The warning does not seem to have served. On 7 September 1855, Dalhousie informed Couper, “I have had heavy mass of business thrown on me, and have been working early and late for some days to get rid of it. I presume I have overdone it and myself, for the other evening I became insensible for some time.”⁹² Yet he worked with enthusiasm. He moved over the length and breadth of the country during those closing months of his rule and inspected railway work where possible. In the far south, the Madras Railway Company had already completed its first section of line. Dalhousie had the pleasure of travelling on this line shortly after he had written about his physical pain to his friend. He wrote to Couper from Madras,

“From Bangalore we again descended into the Carnatic, and reached Madras on Saturday, coming in the last fifty miles on their new and unopened railway. They brought us the last thirty miles at a great pace;

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

⁹¹ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. vi, p. 119, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 October 1854.

⁹² *P.L.*, p. 354.

and I will be bound to say that the happiest man in Asia that day was the Government Consulting Engineer, when he saw the Governor-General safe out of his charge on the platform at the station.”⁹³

The consulting engineer might have been the ‘happiest man in Asia’ by bringing the Governor-General on his line, but the Governor-General himself was perhaps no less happy by travelling in an Asian railway which was the fruit of his own rule.

At the beginning of 1856 Dalhousie said, “I am so dead lame I am not able to sit at table with the world, but am obliged to lie upon a sofa.”⁹⁴ But his work was now heavier than ever. “As the day of departure draws nearer, and as unexpected papers drop in, the work has become worse than ever....I have been working for some days past from six in the morning till ten at night with very little intermission.”⁹⁵ On 28 February, six days before his departure, Dalhousie wrote his last minute on India giving briefly a review of his entire administration. In this review, he recalled the measures that had been taken and the progress that had been made so that the East India Company might derive from the retrospect some degree of satisfaction with the past, and a still larger measure of encouragement for the future. After giving a brief description of some of his achievements, he said,

“While it is gratifying to me to be thus able to state that the moral and social questions which are engaging attention in Europe have not been neglected in India during the last eight years, it is doubly gratifying to

⁹³ *P.L.*, p. 360, 12 November 1855.

⁹⁴ *P.L.*, pp. 368-69, 6 January 1856.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 February 1856.

record, that those years have also witnessed the first introduction into the Indian Empire of three great engines of social improvement, which the sagacity and science of recent times had previously given to the Western nations,—I mean Railways, Uniform Postage, and the Electric Telegraph.⁹⁶

He gave an account of what had already been done to introduce railways in many parts of India and expressed his hope for further extensions. About his main trunk-line, Dalhousie expected that the section between Mirzapur and Agra would be completed by the end of 1857, and the section between Burdwan and Rajmahal in 1858, and the remainder probably not till 1859.⁹⁷ He was satisfied with the work in Bombay and Madras, and hoped that the further plans of lines which he had suggested might be worked out in time. About the line of junction to join the presidency of Bombay with Northern India, the Government of Dalhousie was long beset with difficulties. But in the very last hours of his administration he had had the satisfaction of receiving plans and sections for a very practicable and eligible line from Baroda over the Ghats to Indore, and thence by Bhilsa and Gwalior to Agra forming an excellent junction between Bombay and Hindoostan, and giving easy access to the rich products and important trade of Central India.⁹⁸ This line, he hoped, would be ultimately adopted. Dalhousie closed his words on railways with the expression, "It seems to me that the Honourable Court have every reason to be satisfied with the progress that has been made in the construction of

⁹⁶ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 16, Dalhousie's Final Minute, 28 February 1856.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Indian railways since 1849, and with the prospect of future return."⁹⁹

On 6 March 1856 Lord Dalhousie left India. "OPUS EXEGI"—my work is done. I have laid down my sceptre, and taking leave of those over whom I ruled, have departed. This evening I embarked, and tomorrow shall get to sea....But I am so exhausted with fatigue, agitation, and pain, that I can write a very little only."¹⁰⁰

When Dalhousie had landed in India in 1848, the talk on railways was only a talk. But eight years after when he left India, the whole of the sub-continent had been surveyed for railways, work had been commenced in all important sectors, three main lines had been opened in Bengal, Bombay and Madras, and an entire system of railways with its code of rules and regulations had been laid down. A beginning had thus been made and Dalhousie was right to say in his farewell message:

"While we have a right to congratulate ourselves on what has already been done; while we may regard with complacency the introduction into the East of those great instruments of public benefit, which science has long since created in the West; while we may rejoice that measures have been already taken for opening new sources of public wealth, for ministering to the convenience, for increasing the happiness, and for raising the mental and social condition of the endless millions,....I trust we still shall feel that all we have yet done must be regarded as no more than the first beginnings of greater things that are to come."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁰ *P.L.*, Dalhousie to Couper, 6 March 1856.

¹⁰¹ *Hurkaru*, 6 March 1856, Dalhousie's Farewell address.

Years after Dalhousie had gone, the Government of India, the Home authorities, the local governments, and the boards of railway companies, all pointed out to the schemes and projects which that Governor-General had left behind him as the surest guides to success. In case of disputes or differences in opinion in later years, the late Governor-General's views were consulted and accepted as binding on all. Dalhousie's name and work remained a legacy for the Indian railway system.

Rowland Macdonald Stephenson, the originator of the railway movement in this country, left India soon after Dalhousie. The grateful inhabitants of Calcutta gathered to say,

"From the year 1840 you have worked with an untiring energy to obtain for this country the blessing of railway communication, and we greatly rejoice that you have been enabled to see part of your well considered and admirable project so successfully carried out. We assert that without perseverance such as yours, we should to the present day have been without a single mile of Railway on this side of India. In you we see an example of the truly practical man."¹⁰²

Stephenson replied,

"We all entertain sanguine and well founded hopes from the general introduction of Railway communication into India. Our early efforts will in a very few years be succeeded by works, the full extent and effects of which, have yet scarcely been contemplated. The prospects of the future are bright and cheerful."¹⁰³

² *Englishman*, 8 March 1856.

¹ *Ibid.*

Ninety-one years after Dalhousie and Stephenson's departure, when India became independent, the undivided sub-continent possessed more than forty thousand miles of railways. Today the Indian railway system is the biggest in Asia and the fourth largest in the world.

In spite of criticism made against it, the railway may be regarded as the most useful of British enterprises in India. The criticism has been immense. So late as in 1937, the Indian Railway Enquiry Committee said, "If we may judge from the evidence which we have taken, the Indian railways are unpopular. We would almost say that they are most unpopular institutions in India."¹⁰⁴ Dalhousie's guarantee system has been a main cause of criticism. Between 1844 and 1868, the construction of the railways was entrusted to the railway companies under the state guarantee of a minimum return of $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to 5 per cent. capital invested. It has been pointed out that this system encouraged extravagance in construction, and that the Indian tax-payer had to suffer payment which went out as guaranteed interest to the pocket of English share-holders. This was very true. But it must not be forgotten that when Dalhousie decided in favour of the guarantee system he had no alternative before him. The government was running annual deficit, and was incapable of making railway its own concern. Capital did not come from Indian moneyed class. The papers of Dalhousie and Charles Wood show that repeated attempts were made to raise capital in India, but failing in every attempt, Dalhousie finally said to Wood, "We shall get nothing subscribed to Railways by native capitalists. So you may omit

¹ *Report of Indian Railway Enquiry Committee* (Delhi, 1937), p. 113.

them from your calculations.”¹⁰⁵ Thus railways could be constructed only with foreign capital, and the shareholders in England prepared for risk only when government guaranteed interest. Had the interest not been guaranteed, it goes without saying, the railway enterprise in India might have been delayed for an unknown number of years. Moreover, the system was not maintained on a permanent basis. When in 1869, John Lawrence decided to put an end to the guarantee system, only 4,255 miles had been constructed under the system with a capital outlay of about Rs. 89 crores. Though for several years railways caused heavy financial loss to the state, in the course of time it began to yield large surplus while helping immensely general prosperity of the country.

One school of critics thought that the construction of railways in India was like ‘giving a beggar a carriage to ride in’. India was not ready, so thought this school, because she had no roads to act as feeders, her agriculture was not developed, and her manufactures had not been commenced. It was pointed out that the railway was simply the result of a vast European scientific movement, that enthralled men’s minds at the time, and was carried by the Englishmen into a far distant country, where without considering the vast differences on all main points, the prevailing idea of the age, and the interests of their own countrymen, carried the day. This again may partly be true. But it may be said that with the construction of railways many deficiencies were quickly made up. Railways required roads as their feeders; agriculture was developed because agricultural products could be conveyed to distant markets, and

¹ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 30 May 1854.

trade and commerce were revolutionised through speedy means of transport. Railways broke down the static and localised economy of India as well as brought about a new industrial age.

Equally significant was the social effect of railways. They prepared ground for increased contact between different peoples and places, and in the course of time helped create a national feeling. In brief, the coming of railways, to a great extent, marked the beginning of a new age.

CHAPTER IV 101

The Introduction of the Electric Telegraph.

So far as we know, the possibility of introducing the electric telegraph into India was first thought of by William O' Shaughnessy. Born at Limerick in October 1809, he was educated in the University of Edinburgh, and, having been admitted to the medical profession, entered the medical service of the East India Company in 1833.¹ He worked in Calcutta as an assistant surgeon, a professor of chemistry in the Medical College, and as an officiating joint-secretary to the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

It was after his arrival in India that the subject of sending telegraphic messages was discussed in Europe and America, and he became interested in the accounts of attempts made to use the various indications of the electrical fluid as the medium of instantaneous communication between distant places. The knowledge he got from books and periodicals finally induced him "to institute the experiments,"² at Hooghly (in his spare time). In this O' Shaughnessy received the warm aid and support of N. Wallich, the-then superintendent of botanical gardens, who protected the experimentalist against much of the derision which his attempts excited in the community of Calcutta. The experiments bore fruit, and O' Shaughnessy claimed that "In April and May, 1839, the first long line of Telegraph ever cons-

¹ *Vide Times*, 11 January 1889.

² *J.A.S.B.*, September 1839, O' Shaughnessy's Memoranda.

tructed in any country was erected" by him "in the vicinity of Calcutta."³ The line was twenty-one miles in length, embracing 7000 feet of river circuit. "Thus while in Europe it was still a disputed point whether the electric telegraph could be worked through long distances, the fact was established on the banks and in the bed of the Hooghly."⁴ O' Shaughnessy felt that the "experiment performed on this line removed all reasonable doubts regarding the practicability of working Electric Telegraphs through enormous distances"; yet, it remained "a question then, and for three years later, disputed by high authorities, and regarded generally with contemptuous scepticism."⁵

It seems that the inventor was ahead of his time. O' Shaughnessy achieved success before public opinion was prepared, and therefore, he could carry neither the government nor the public with him. This is nothing quite unusual in the progress of physical sciences. It happens that the mind which conceives the idea or makes the discovery is not permitted to work out the results and display the advantages to the world, at large. So, as far as India and the electric telegraph were concerned, here the matter stopped. Time passed on and the whole subject was laid in abeyance. O' Shaughnessy published the results of his experiments in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* and proceeded to demolish the lines.* Meanwhile, experiments carried on in Europe and America proved successful and rapid

³ *E.T.*, 14 May 1853.

⁴ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 1 September 1856.

⁵ *E.T.*, 14 May 1853.

* The Paper entitled "Memoranda relative to experiments on the communication of Telegraphic signals by induced Electricity" was published in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, September 1839.

progress was made on the subject. Every railway company began to erect the telegraph along its line, and each month it was becoming more and more appreciated as an instrument of communication.

Nearly nine years after, in August 1848, the Bengal Government drew the attention of the Court of Directors to the experiments which were made by O' Shaughnessy so far back as 1839.⁶ But the Court does not seem to have taken any serious notice of it and delayed sending a reply for more than a year.

During this time some of the English Companies explored the possibilities of laying telegraphs in India. Persons who had constructed the telegraph lines on the London and North Western Railways in Great Britain tried to obtain permission from the Court of Directors to supply the East India Company with all necessary apparatus for electric telegraphs in India, and if desired, to lay telegraphs down in India complete and ready for use.⁷ In July 1849, one Hyde Clarke produced for the Court's consideration a summary view of the reasons for and advantages of, a telegraphic system in India. It was a fairly long report which tried to show the political, military, commercial and many other advantages that would follow its introduction.⁸ Politically, the report said, the telegraph "will enable the General Government of India, wherever seated, to communicate instantly with the Presidencies and Governments and will particularly facilitate communications when a Governor is away from the seat of Government. It will make the action of the General and other Governments

⁶ Court's attention was drawn in a Despatch from Bengal in the Marine Department dated the 2nd August 1848.

⁷ *R.H.C.*, no. 2, Highton's Letter to E. I. Company, 19 April 1849.

⁸ *R.H.C.*, no. 2, Hyde Clarke's Letter to Court, 3 July 1849.

more vigorous and decided, and will give greater energy and unity to it. From military considerations the telegraph was to result in a more efficient control of the Commander-in-Chief over the armies of India, to increase the responsibility of the subordinate officers in command, and to ensure greater harmony and unity of action among the civil, political and military officers. Commercially, the telegraph was to help create more rapid knowledge of market prices, of state of stocks and crops, and quicker communication with Europe.⁹ At the same time as this report, a certain J. Whishaw, who was concerned with the General Telegraph Offices in England, submitted another report, and characterised the proposed Indian lines as "simple, effectual and economical". In Great Britain, the average cost of the lines was from £150 to £200 per mile and in America it did not exceed one third of the English rate. He promised to lay down the lines in India at a charge nearer to that of the American system.¹⁰ This report recommended for telegraphic communication in the first instance between Calcutta, Agra, Delhi, and Simla; between Calcutta and Bombay via Mirzapur, Rewah, and Nagpur; and between Bombay and Madras via Hyderabad.

In spite of such reports and schemes, it appeared to the directors of the East India Company that it was not possible to establish an electric telegraph in India by means of wires carried above ground, on account of the mischief committed by birds and monkeys and the danger arising from the exposure of so much of attractive metal to the thunder storms which are of so frequent

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *R.H.C.*, no. 2, Letter from Whishaw to Melvill, 4 July 1849.

occurrence in tropical climate.¹¹ About wires carried under ground, the Court was not willing to do anything unless practical tests were carried out in India. The Court realised that "such a means of communication would be highly advantageous to the state and the community", but feared that "many serious considerations are involved in the question". Under such circumstances, it wrote to the Governor-General,

"We are desirous therefore of receiving your opinion as to the expediency of establishing a system of Electric Telegraphs independently of those which may be made simultaneously with the construction of each Railroad, and in the event of your taking a favourable view of the subject we should wish to be informed of the means which, in your opinion, could be best employed for carrying it out."¹²

When the Court's despatch dated the 26th September 1849 came to India, Lord Dalhousie was free from the Punjab war. The subject of electric telegraph was not new to him, because, it was under his administration of the Board of Trade, that the first Act incorporating the electric telegraph company in England was passed.¹³ Moreover, he was a statesman "not to be deterred from introducing any improvement by mere difficulty." He at once perceived the value of telegraph both to the government and the community,¹⁴ and without delay called for reports from William O' Shaughnessy, and Lieutenant-Colonel Forbes, of the engineers.¹⁵

¹¹ *Telegraph Despatches*, fos. 1-3; Public Despatch to Governor-General-in-Council, 26 September 1849.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *F.I.*, 15 April 1852.

¹⁴ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 1 September 1856.

¹⁵ *E.T.*, 14 May 1853.

These two officers promptly submitted their preliminary reports which were regarded as extremely interesting and valuable. Both of them, from their intimate knowledge of the various difficulties, and of what had already been effected by O' Shaughnessy in his experiments earlier, recommended the institution of full preliminary enquiry and experiment. Their observations gave the Government the right of entertaining a well-grounded confidence and the Governor-General said,

"I entertain no sort of doubt of the wisdom and the necessity of the step which they concur in recommending, namely the institution of full preliminary enquiry and experiment....I think this should be done, and done without delay."¹⁶

For the purpose of experiment, he directed one half of the line to be laid above the ground, the other below the ground, so that every doubtful fact on both sides might be fully tried and tested and whichever plan proved preferable, be retained. The experiment called for expenditure. The Government of India was running a deficit. But Dalhousie declared,

"Not withstanding the continued pressure on finance, I regard this matter of Electric Telegraph as of such infinite moment in India, that I recommend the sanction of the Government being given to whatever sum may be necessary for conducting the experiment on a scale sufficiently large to enable those charged with it to carry on their labours with rapidity and fullest efficiency."¹⁷

The Home authorities were informed within a few days that "An extensive experiment on the electric tele-

¹⁶ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. iv, 26 March 1850.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

graph has been ordered, with reference to the peculiarities of Indian climate.¹⁸

The experiment having been resolved upon, it was decided by the Governor-General that the details of the matter should be regulated by the President in Council. But the latter wanted to put the experiment under the charge of the Military Board. To this Dalhousie immediately objected. Henry Elliot, his Secretary, wrote to Halliday from Simla, "The Governor-General is unable however to comprehend why His Honour (President) should propose to place Dr. O' Shaughnessy under the orders of the Military Board. Overburdened already with functions, the Board has no qualifications that His Lordship is aware of for superintending this particular work, and he believes the experiment will be more satisfactorily conducted directly under the Government than by hampering it with the supervision of the Military Board."¹⁹ This was done, and Halliday informed O' Shaughnessy about the dissolution of the committee which was formed for the superintendence and working of the experiment, and entrusted the duty solely to him under the direct orders of the Government. O' Shaughnessy was requested to start the operations without delay.²⁰

O' Shaughnessy thought out a wide plan and his project embraced a line of more than two thousand miles, with Agra as the centre of union, to which a communication was to be established both from Bombay and Calcutta, and from where the line was to branch

¹⁸ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, f. 15, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 8 April 1850.

¹⁹ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 30, Letter from Henry Elliot to Frederick James Halliday, 24 July 1850.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter from Halliday to O'Shaughnessy, 9 August 1850.

off towards Simla and Lahore. He estimated the expense at 700 rupees a mile or fifteen lakhs of rupees for the whole undertaking, and he calculated that the expense of maintaining it, together with the interest on the capital, would be, in great part, borne by the contributions of those who might avail themselves of it.²¹ In its technical aspect, he wanted practical experiments, and decided to lay down a line between Calcutta and Hooghly. His proposals of December 1850 were placed before the Government, and an experimental line of telegraph, half subterranean, half overground, thirty miles in length, was ordered to be laid out.²²

The work of laying out this experimental line began in 1851. Though it was proposed between Calcutta and Hooghly, this plan was abandoned, and it was determined to lay the line between Calcutta and Kedgerree, the first point on the river at which inward bound vessels communicated with the shore.²³ The first part of the line was laid in the earth, in a trench 2 feet deep and covered in with earth from the first station at Alipur, three miles south of Government House, to the Semaphore Tower at Diamond Harbour, $26\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Alipur. This operation was completed on Saturday the 8th of March 1851.²⁴ Two days after, O'Shaughnessy gave a brief description of the Diamond Harbour road and of the peculiar and formidable difficulties he had to overcome. From Alipur to Thakurpukur, a missionary station, the road was one of the best in Bengal, broad metalled in the centre, shaded by a continuous line of

²¹ *F.I.*, 18 April 1850.

²² *E.T.*, 14 May 1853.

²³ *F. I.*, 22 July 1852.

²⁴ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 34, Letter from O'Shaughnessy to Halliday, 10 March 1851.

tall trees and thickly bordered by gardens, tanks and villages. At Thakurpukur the garden cultivation ceased abruptly and the road entered into a wide and open plain, which from June to December was a perfect lake, covered with water from 12 inches to 3 feet in depth. Across this swamp the traffic and intercourse of the country were carried on in large canoes, each cut out of a single sal tree. White ants swarmed everywhere, and caused the speedy destruction of everything they could devour or attack. Water rats and snakes in incalculable numbers burrowed in the road side. Along the whole line from Thakurpukur to Diamond Harbour there was not, from June to December, a dry spot large enough to accommodate a sergent's tent being pitched except at Vishnupur, Rajhat and Sursya. O'Shaughnessy said that he entered on the construction of such a line with full knowledge and appreciation of all the circumstances and difficulties because he thought it most fair and wise to subject the experiment to the severest conceivable trials.²⁵

The experimental lines which were constructed at the beginning of 1851, remained in status quo, until a sufficient quantity of rain, at least 35 inches, fell, to test their insulation and to regulate ulterior operations. When heavy rains had actually fallen, the Kedgerie line was undertaken, twenty-five miles in length. O'Shaughnessy selected a branch line of eleven miles and carried it across the paddy fields and swamps from the missionary station at Vishnupur to Mayapur. A branch junction line, enclosed in sand and rosin cement, was also conducted underground about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Alipur to Chandpal Ghat. About the Mayapur line the experimentalist said, "I purposely selected this troublesome

²⁵ *Ibid.*

and objectionable line, on the principle which I have all through this undertaking been guided by, that of encountering the greatest difficulties first, so as to know the worst at once. Expense and labour thus incurred lead clearly to economy and facility in the construction of other and more important lines."²⁶

The zeal showed by him was, indeed, praiseworthy. "I have never been in a telegraph office elsewhere", he said, "and I have had no one to refer to here for advice in any doubtful case. Whatever has been done has, moreover, been accomplished in the hours snatched with difficulty from the laborious duties of the Assay Office, in which I well knew that not even the semblance of the slightest remissness would be passed over without severe animadversion by the Mint Committee."²⁷ It may be remembered here that besides his medical profession in which he was made a surgeon in the Company's Bengal army in 1848, he also worked simultaneously as a deputy assay master and chemical examiner in the Bengal Government.

The general result of the experiments, during the season of thunderstorms, was, that the overground system proved to be better than the subterranean plan. The underground method was also far more costly, and therefore the overground method was approved. With regard to the instruments used, a fair trial was given in thunder, lightning, and in rain, to every kind that could be prepared or procured. The little telegraphs then used, were constructed upon the elementary principles of electricity by an Indian in the office. Six others were

²⁶ *P.P., H.C., 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, p. 5., O'Shaughnessy to Government of Bengal, 30 March 1852.*

²⁷ *Ibid., p. 14.*

always ready on the table, and they were often charged, twice or thrice during the same thunderstorm. It was thus that O'Shaughnessy worked 'in the teeth of the elements'²⁸ to prove his system practicable. The future of the telegraph system in India greatly depended on the success of the above experiments. It was discussed in Bengal that as soon as the success of the line between Kedgerree and Calcutta would be completely demonstrated, the question would arise to make immediate arrangements for extending those operations to connect the most important towns in that presidency with Calcutta.

By the beginning of 1852, three small lines had been experimented with and were in actual use for public business. These lines were from Calcutta to Diamond Harbour, 30 miles; from Vishnupur to Mayapur, 11 miles; and from Kukurhattee to Kedgerree, 25 miles; making in all 66 miles.²⁹ In March, the rivers Hooghly and Haldee were crossed, and the line from Calcutta to the sea opened for official and public correspondence.³⁰

When the experimental lines were completed, William O'Shaughnessy in obedience to the wishes of Lord Dalhousie produced a report showing the state of the lines then constructed and in operation, the working and results of the system of correspondence in use since the offices had been opened for actual business, the expenses incurred in all branches of the undertaking, and the bearings of his own experience and information on the construction of lines to the North-Western Provinces, Bombay and Madras.³¹ The report showed that the

²⁸ *F.I.*, 23 October 1851.

²⁹ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, p. 4.

³⁰ *E.T.*, 14 May 1853.

³¹ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, p. 4.

degree of confidence reposed in the telegraph office by the public was such as to surprise all. Messages on banking business, law matters, opium speculations, domestic concerns, etc., many being of a strictly secret nature, were entrusted to the office; and in no case had O'Shaughnessy any reason to find fault with his employees for any indiscretion. The pecuniary returns were three-fold greater than what had been anticipated. "I stated that Rs. 200 a month might be expected; over Rs. 600 are now constantly realised", said O'Shaughnessy. Besides the messages from private individuals, the telegraph had daily recourse to reports and intelligence, and had orders to and from the marine department for reports to the superintendent of salt chowkies and other public authorities. The aggregate of such communications, charged, *pro forma*, at the same rate as private messages, showed that the work done by the telegraph office was a direct profit to government, even in that incipient stage of operations.²²

From the informations gathered from the English and American systems, O'Shaughnessy was of opinion that an office or station should be put up every 100 miles, in order to secure correspondence in all weathers. The cost of each office, it was calculated, would average Rs. 500 a month; and current expenses included, approximately Rs. 5,000 a month, as the cost of correspondence on a line of 1,000 miles. He believed that ten stations established on the North-West trunk road line, would pay a very considerable sum for the transmission of private business, provided the system be adopted to make a low and uniform charge, for each message of 16 words, of two syllables each, one rupee, irrespective of

²² *Ibid.*

the distance to which the message was sent. The experimentalist suggested, "With a double line along the valley of the Ganges to Allahabad and via Agra to Bombay, at a cost of Rs. 550 per mile, and embracing 25 stations, I consider it beyond all doubt that not only would every expense be paid, but a large net profit be insured." The Diamond Harbour and Kedgeree lines seemed to O'Shaughnessy to have answered every possible question on the subject. He was certain about an economical cost of construction, about successful working of the system, and about speedy construction of far-flung lines. "Allowed eight months for importation and collection of materials, their distribution on the line, and all other preliminary arrangements, three or even five miles a day could be easily constructed from the commencement of operations", said O'Shaughnessy.³³

The work which O'Shaughnessy successfully completed was "entirely a labour of love, the enthusiastic love of science". He had been labouring under every disadvantage. He had been able to give to those interesting operations only the small scraps of leisure he could snatch from the arduous duties of the mint. His success, however, quickly drew admiration from many quarters. Some hailed him as 'the first chemist and natural philosopher' among the Englishmen in India. According to Dalhousie, he was a man of real genius.³⁴ The Governor-General visited his experimental line and in common with hundreds of others became satisfied with the beautiful simplicity of the work, the regularity of its operations, and became convinced of the perfect success of it as a national experiment of the highest and most immediate

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Hogg, 24 April 1852.

moment to the interests of India.³⁵ It was expected of him that he would relieve O'Shaughnessy from the dull and mechanical labours of the assay office, and order him at once into the field.³⁶ It was said, "...if Lord Dalhousie could contrive to initiate this great improvement before laying down the reins of Government, there can be no question that he would establish a claim to the gratitude of his contemporaries, and the honourable remembrance of posterity, greater even than he has acquired by the conquest and annexation of the Punjab. It would, indeed, be among the noblest peace triumphs."³⁷

Dalhousie issued a "long and deeply interesting minute", as O'Shaughnessy called it, in April 1852, on the electric telegraph. He told the Court of Directors of the success of the Calcutta-Kedgerie line. "Neither the heat nor the rains, neither the violent atmospheric influences, nor the thunder-storms and hurricanes to which it has been exposed during the past twelve months, in a degree which will probably never be exceeded, have interrupted the full and continuous working of the line." About O'Shaughnessy the Governor-General said,

"I believe I am doing no more than expressing the universal opinion of the community when I say, that for them the Government of India is indebted to the ability, the undaunted energy, the perseverance and skill of Dr. W. O'Shaughnessy. He has accomplished the whole, unaided, within a comparatively short time, in the midst of other imperative duties, and without any remuneration whatever. I am of opinion that for these things

³⁵ *P.P., H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, pp. 14-15, Minute by the Governor of Bengal (Dalhousie), 14 April 1852.

³⁶ *F.I.*, 23 October 1851.

³⁷ *F.I.*, 27 November 1851.

Dr. O'Shaughnessy deserves the highest approbation and substantial proofs of the gratitude of the Government he has served so well."³⁸

Personally, Dalhousie developed a great liking for O'Shaughnessy, though he saw him to be "a little rapid and slapdash in what he does and says", but believed that cautioned on that point and put on guard, he might be used "with great good effect".³⁹ He ordered a reward of Rs. 20,000 to be paid to O'Shaughnessy for the service he had rendered.

In his despatch on the electric telegraph the Governor-General emphasised that the early establishment of the electric telegraph was all important alike to the government and to the community, and since the lines were practicable, safe, cheap, and profitable, he requested the Court to sanction immediate construction of a line or lines from Calcutta to Agra, to Bombay, to Peshawar, and to Madras, either simultaneously, or as soon as possible one after the other. He reminded the authorities in England, "Everything, all the world over, moves faster nowadays than it used to do, except the transactions of Indian business."⁴⁰

Simultaneous with his despatch, the Governor-General decided to send William O'Shaughnessy to England; first, to plead with the Court of Directors and next, to avail himself of the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the English, the continental, and even the American systems and modes of construction. It may be remembered here that this scientist had never seen

³⁸ *P.P., H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, pp. 14-15.

³⁹ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, Dalhousie to Hogg, 24 April 1852.

⁴⁰ *P.P., H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, p. 15.

an electric telegraph line in his home country or Europe, though he had so successfully constructed one, and contrived its organisation in India. When O'Shaughnessy came to India "any idea of establishing an instantaneous intercourse between distant localities and kingdoms by means of electricity, would have been considered as wild and visionary as a voyage to the moon in a balloon."⁴¹ All the knowledge he possessed regarding the application of electricity to telegraph communications was derived exclusively from books and it was simply with the information thus obtained that he was enabled to establish the experimental lines in India. But for extensive projects of telegraph lines, he needed opportunities of examining their practical working in Europe, and of obtaining information from personal investigations. The Court of Directors was not very sanguine about telecommunication in India. It was needful to convince the directors, and to explain to them the nature of the obstacles and the facilities which attended such an undertaking in a tropical climate. No one else could have done it better than O'Shaughnessy.

Before Dalhousie's official despatch had gone through the Government of India, the Governor-General sent two private letters to the East India House, one to Lieutenant Colonel Sykes, one of the directors of the Company, and another to the Chairman of the Court, Sir James Weir Hogg. To Sykes, he said, "I am very anxious to enlist your best exertions in aid of the project which goes home by this mail for immediate construction of the Electric Telegraph. The experimental line of 80 miles was completed only a month ago and is preeminently successful having already stood every test

⁴¹ *F.I.*, 29 April 1852.

it is likely to be subjected to. The Government have taken upon itself to send home Dr. W. O'Shaughnessy, its constructor, in the view of enabling to see the lines in England and in the continent and in the hope that the Court will use him to expedite the scheme. Time, time is everything and I pray you to put forth all your energy and good will to get the Court to give us here vast public and commercial boon, and to get it set agoing sharp."⁴² To the Chairman he said, "It is really impossible to overstate the value of the work and of its early accomplishment."⁴³

By mid-century a network of telegraphs was rapidly covering Europe. The complete success of the submarine electric telegraph, which was laid down across the straits of Dover between England and France, opened up further possibilities of telegraphic communication. Command over the ocean had been obtained as over the land. England was united to the continent of Europe, and the next object of pursuit was to unite her by the same instrumentality to the continent of America. The possibility of laying down a submarine telegraph between London and Bombay was talked of and did not seem remote. "But unless Lord Dalhousie", so was said, "looks very sharp about him, and hastens on our own inland Telegraph, we shall have a telegraph communication between Bombay and London, long before we have one between Bombay, and Lahore, or Calcutta."⁴⁴

Lord Dalhousie did not seem to have desired to stay behind his time. His comprehensive mind could gather

⁴² *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to Persons in Europe, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Sykes, 23 April 1852.

⁴³ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Hogg, 24 April 1852.

⁴⁴ *F.I.*, 25 December 1851.

proof of the values of telegraph even from the working of that little line at Calcutta. The Burmese War was going on across the eastern frontier, and the Governor-General at a very tense time of the war was spending restless days for news from the front. How the telegraph carried him the news of the fall of Rangoon is gathered from his personal diary, in which he wrote on 25 April 1852:

“At last on the morning of the 23rd at 10 O’Clock Dr. O’Shaughnessy, the Superintendent of the Electric Telegraph, presented himself at my door; and on being admitted put into my hands a slip of paper, on which was a telegraphic message that at 10 minutes to 10 O’Clock Hon’ble S. Rattler had passed Kedgerree with despatches. Rangoon and Martaban, it added, were captured. O’Shaughnessy was greatly excited and agitated and at first could not utter a word. When I had read the paper he gasped out ‘that is my return for your goodness to me’ and after a few more words off he went to publish the welcome news.”⁴⁵

Within a few days Dalhousie said to the President of the Board of Control, J. C. Herries, “I have sent home papers on a very important subject—the electric telegraph. I beg very earnestly your attention to them, and hope that you will enable me to commence at once and effectually this improvement, of vital consequence to this country both politically and commercially.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Dalhousie’s Diary*, 1852, part i.

Dalhousie further noted, “He had just received a donation of 20,000 rupees from the Government in acknowledgement of the great service he had rendered in successfully establishing electric telegraph line from Calcutta to Kedgerree. It is the work of great value.”

⁴⁶ *D.P.*, Letter to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Herries, 26 April 1852

O'Shaughnessy proceeded to England on 3 May 1852. In the meantime the directors of the East India Company had observed with much interest from papers and reports the progress of the experimental line, and received, as they said, "with true satisfaction the account of its successful termination." "We shall be prepared", the directors informed the Governor-General, "to give our serious consideration which O'Shaughnessy may lay before us."⁴⁷ On his arrival in England O'Shaughnessy met the President, J. C. Herries, who wrote to Dalhousie, "I have seen Dr. O'Shaughnessy and am much pleased with him. I will do everything in my power to forward his business here and to promote your intentions with respect to the Electric Telegraph system in India."⁴⁸ The Home authorities in this matter worked promptly. O'Shaughnessy became glad to hear from the Chairman, James Weir Hogg, that the Governor-General's propositions were already sanctioned, and said, "Such rapidity in the despatch of an important measure is, perhaps, without a parallel in any department of Government." All subsequent steps were taken with proportionate speed.⁴⁹ Dalhousie congratulated Herries, "Your very prompt and complete adoption of all our proposals regarding the Electric Telegraph has been most gratifying to us here. Be assured it is a work whose importance and value to this country cannot be over estimated."⁵⁰

The Court heard from O'Shaughnessy his evidence, and maturely considered his proposals. It was to the

⁴⁷ *Telegraph Despatches*, Letter to Governor-General, 23 June 1852.

⁴⁸ *D.P.* Letters from Board of Control, Herries to Dalhousie, 24 July 1852.

⁴⁹ *E.T.*, 14 May 1853.

⁵⁰ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control. Dalhousie to Herries, 9 August 1852.

*credit of O'Shaughnessy that he carried the directors with him, and they at once determined to take measures for the immediate provisions of the materials required to be sent for the construction of 3,150 miles of electric telegraph in India, to connect the various seats of government, the three presidencies, and the North Western Provinces, and the Punjab.*⁵¹

For some time O'Shaughnessy remained busy in England. The requisite contracts were issued for all the stores. Sixty enlisted artificers were placed in training at Warley. An inspection of the home and foreign telegraph lines was undertaken. Collections were made of all the instruments in use in Europe and America. And a manual of instructions for the subordinate officers, artificers, and signallers was prepared by O'Shaughnessy for the guidance of the persons to be employed on the works in India.⁵² He sought help and advice from such men as C. Manby, the secretary of the Institute of the Civil Engineers, C. V. Walker, the superintendent of the South Eastern Telegraph line, James Carmichael of the Submarine Company, Alphonse Foy, the director-general of the French lines, and many others.

While O'Shaughnessy was busy in England, Dalhousie detailed a programme for the telegraph system in India, showing the direction of the main lines to be worked. "A line of electric telegraph, uniting Calcutta with Benares, Allahabad, Agra, Umballa, Lahore, and Peshawar", said the Governor-General, "will touch every locality in which the occurrence of political events is at all likely. It will enable the Supreme Government to obtain the earliest intelligence of any such occurrence,

⁵¹ *Telegraph Despatches*, Letter to Governor-General, 20 October 1852.

⁵² *E.T.*, 14 May 1853.

and within a few hours to make known the orders those events may require at the extremest post of the western frontier."⁵³

About the commercial advantage of the above trunk line, he pointed out that the same line that conferred these political advantages upon the governments would enable the mercantile community at Calcutta to correspond with equal facility with all those districts of Hindoostan from which the main body of their trade proceeded. As the line was to be carried to Benares, it was expected that the communication would be sufficiently close for all conveniences with Mirzapur, the great entrepot of the trade of the Saugor and Narbada provinces. Or, as Dalhousie thought, it would probably be found preferable to carry the line up the right bank of the Ganges through Mirzapur itself; if not, a very short branch would anywhere connect it with the main line. "Thence on its way onwards to the several points I have mentioned, it would traverse the plain of Hindoostan, touch upon Oude, skirt Rohilcund, and be at no distance anywhere from the principal points towards which the export and import trades now tend."⁵⁴

The next line of importance, according to Dalhousie, was the one from Calcutta to Bombay. "By means of it will be secured the earliest information of a political and commercial nature from Europe; and in like manner, the latest tidings of all events will be given from hence to England." About communication with Madras, Dalhousie recommended that there should be no direct line between Calcutta and Madras, but that a line from

⁵³ *P.P., H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, p. 18, Governor-General's Minute, 16 December 1852.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Bombay to Madras should be substituted for it. This line from Madras to Bombay was to touch Bangalore, Bellary, Poona, and Hyderabad in its course.

Instructions were issued to the governments of Madras, Bombay and the North West Provinces to make a survey of the proposed lines in their respective provinces.⁵⁵ The Government of Madras was asked whether the proposed line (Madras to Bombay) could be constructed, and whether Hyderabad could be included; and if so, whether it should be in the main line or connected by a branch line; and to say what, in its opinion, would be the best line of communication between Madras and Calcutta, so as to ensure the greatest amount of political, military, and commercial advantages.⁵⁶ The Bombay Government was asked if "the branch from Bombay should join the trunk line at Agra, following the present great road through Malwa, by way of Indore, or whether it should be carried lower down, by way of the Nerbudda", and to give its opinion on the best line of communication between Madras and Bombay, and particularly whether the line which might be recommended would be carried along an existing line of road.⁵⁷ Remarks and suggestions were also called for from the Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Provinces regarding the line from Calcutta to the North West.

The year 1853 was said to be "the year of the beginning of great things" in India.⁵⁸ In the middle of

⁵⁵ *P.P.*, H.C., 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, pp. 21-24, Letters from J. P. Grant to Madras, Bombay and N.W.P.; 22 December 1852.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, J. P. Grant to Govt. of Fort St. George, 22 December 1852.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, J. P. Grant to Govt. of Bombay, 22 December 1852.

⁵⁸ *F.I.*, 9 February 1854.

May, O'Shaughnessy announced from England that "The artificers are now on their voyage to the East, and in October next twenty camps of construction will be engaged in extending the web of telegraphs all over India."⁵⁹ In his Manual of Instructions he called upon those who were to work under him in the following words :

"The duty is a noble one. If it presents many difficulties and some dangers these will but enhance the merit of the success which energy and zeal and attention will certainly accomplish.... Let us all, then vie with each other in the execution of our exciting task, and indulge in the hope that we may be spared to witness the miracle of Calcutta and Bombay exchanging despatches in minutes instead of weeks—when the answer may arrive from one thousand miles before the ink is dry on the record of the question—and when persons more than that distance from each other can communicate more quickly than the inmates of different rooms in the same house."⁶⁰

Before he left England, O'Shaughnessy submitted a tentative scheme regarding the establishment which was required for the superintendence, management, and working of the electric telegraph throughout India. It was expected that he would so regulate his departure as to arrive in India in July 1853 and to make necessary arrangements for the commencement of operations at the beginning of the cold season. In April 1853, out of

⁵⁹ *E.T.*, 14 May 1853.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

O'Shaughnessy also said, "The history of the telegraph in India must convince every one employed that, while unavoidable failures are looked upon with indulgence, successful exertion is certain of proportionate reward."

60 men trained at Warley, 40 were on their way to Bengal in ship 'Gloriosa', and rest 20 were ready to sail for Madras and Bombay.

In the meantime the reports of the provincial governments were ready. The Madras Government concurred to the views of the Government of India, that the most advisable course to adopt in the first instance was to connect Madras with Bombay; and suggested that the line might proceed by Bangalore, Bellary, Hyderabad, Sholapore and Poona, to Bombay, making an aggregate distance of about 1,050 miles. The construction of this line was supposed to attend with no difficulty, throughout its length it was to pass along existing roads, and towards Bangalore it was expected to follow the course of the railway about to be commenced.⁶¹

The Bombay Government took the views of the Commander-in-Chief, the Military Board, the Quarter-Master General and the Post-Master General about the line from Calcutta to Bombay, and recommended that it should join the Grand Trunk line at Agra, and that the line from Agra should pass through Gwalior to Indore.⁶² The Lieutenant-Governor, James Thomason, agreed that the Grand Trunk Road undoubtedly afforded the greatest facilities for the line of electric telegraph, and said, "It is direct, level, well bridged wherever practicable, and above all has maintained upon it a constant and vigilant watch and ward."⁶³ He further sent a letter from Colonel Cautley, expressing an opinion of the necessity of having an electric telegraph for the special purposes of the

⁶¹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 51, Letter from Fort St. George to Govt. of India, 24 February 1853.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Letter from Bombay to Govt. of India, 3 March 1853.

⁶³ *P.P., H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, p. 33, Vide Note of J. P. Grant, 5 May 1853.

Ganges Canal, in the upper part. F. G. Siddons, who was officiating as the superintendent of the electric telegraphs while O'Shaughnessy was abroad, was anxious to proceed on with the work in Upper India. The season was fast approaching for the commencement of the projected line. But the telegraph people were in great measure ignorant of the difficulties which lay before them on the road, in the shape of creeks, villages, rice fields etc. It was thought to be an immediate necessity to despatch a person up the intended route for the purpose of obtaining a rough survey, and a general idea of the nature of the country through which the line was to pass. O'Shaughnessy, fully alive to the importance of the step, wrote from England to F. G. Siddons, recommending that the then inspector of the telegraph, Babu Shib Chandra Nandy, be despatched with instructions to make a survey of the proposed route from Calcutta to Agra. The above named gentleman was regarded as fully qualified in every respect for the duty.⁶⁴

By May 1853, J. P. Grant, Secretary to the Government of India, with the reports of all the provinces in his hand, calculated the total length of the lines then to be constructed as 3,673 miles. This total contained in it lines from Calcutta to Agra, 824 miles; from Agra to Peshawar, 950 miles, from Agra to Bombay, 766 miles; from Bombay to Madras, 908 miles; and an additional branch from Bellary to Hyderabad, 225 miles.⁶⁵ Already materials for 3,150 miles had been ordered by that time and a part had arrived. The whole number of posts required was estimated at 50,000.

By the middle of 1853, the introduction of railways

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, F. G. Siddons to Cecil Beadon, 31 March 1853.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36, Note of J. P. Grant, 5 May 1853.

was a settled fact, and the railways required their separate wires. The Governor-General had to decide whether the railway telegraph and the government telegraph should be used for one and the same purpose or be distinct. There was controversy over this question, and Dalhousie finally said, "There is no need that a telegraph along the railway line should be a competitor with the Government telegraph. If the Government shall, at its own cost, construct an electric telegraph over India, it will have as clear a right to prohibit the railway company from employing their line for any purposes but railway purposes, or such as the Government may sanction."⁶⁶

He had also to decide about the management and control of the telegraph lines. Dalhousie pointed out that it was not absolutely essential that general lines of telegraph should be under the control and management of the government; they were not so in England, although the British Government, in certain specified emergencies, reserved power to itself to take temporary possession of them; but that they were so among the continental powers of Europe. About India he decided, "—the Government of India would certainly have a right to reserve such measure of control as it pleased; for it is about to construct a general system of telegraph lines all over India, open to the use of the public, at its own sole cost. . . ."⁶⁷

It was an important decision, and in taking it he was guided by his own experience in England. The English telegraphs were the property of the private companies. The right to exercise a control over them arose at the desire of Lord Dalhousie. When the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37, Minute by Governor-General, 7 May 1853.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

charter of the companies was under consideration, it was referred to the Board of Trade, to undergo such amendment and improvement as they might deem necessary. The President of the Board at that time was Lord Dalhousie, and he immediately inserted a clause securing to the administration the power of taking possession of the lines, during any period of internal difficulty or danger. The first evidence of the wisdom of the measure, it was said, was exhibited in the so-called Edinburgh Affair when the Chartists could not communicate through the telegraph for a countrywide agitation because of the sudden control of the system by government. It was said that "Had the telegraph been in operation, every great city in England might have furnished its quota to swell the Chartist forces....The single exercise of a legitimate authority limited the scene of disturbance to London alone, and the grand meeting (which the Chartists had planned) died a natural death."¹⁶⁸

In a minute dated 7 May 1853 Dalhousie finally approved the electric telegraph line from Calcutta to Benares through the station of Barrackpore, and along the Great Trunk Road to Benares, as being the shortest, cheapest, safest, and most immediately available line that could be found. Some suggested that the North Indian telegraph should run along the projected rail line. This suggestion could not be accepted because the government and the public wanted the telegraph forthwith, but the line of railway was not yet settled, and certainly was not to be constructed for about seven or eight years to come. The line of telegraph, therefore, could not be laid down with any approach to accuracy in order to bring it into due proximity to the railway

¹*F.I.*, 15 June 1848.

line. Between Northern India and Bombay, the Governor-General thought it expedient not to spend money on a separate direct line from Bombay to Calcutta, but decided to take the line from Bombay to meet the Upper Indian line at Agra. By this, Bombay was enabled to communicate with equal facility with Upper India and Bengal. About a line between Madras and Bombay, it was agreed that it should be carried by Bangalore and Bellary. From Bellary the Madras Government wanted to proceed by Hyderabad, Sholapur, and Poona; the Bombay Government wanted to carry it by Belgaum, and Kolapoor and Poona. To Dalhousie the latter was by far the shorter line and was of greater public importance. He selected and sanctioned it as the main line of telegraph between Madras and Bombay. The Madras Government urged the construction of a line of telegraph for communication with Hyderabad and Nagpur. The importance of this in both cases was recognised, especially in the case of Hyderabad. But the Governor-General said, "In both cases the line would pass almost entirely through foreign territory. These considerations induce me to recommend that Hyderabad and Nagpur should not be included in the general scheme at the present moment." Dalhousie, by this time, thought of linking Burma with India and said, "In the first instance it might be carried from Prome to Sandoway, whence a steamer would bring intelligence to the Presidency from Pegu, of two days' date. Subsequently it might be extended by Arracan and Dacca to Calcutta. This latter general line is probably remote in prospect."⁶⁹

As regards British relations with Burma at this time,

⁶⁹ *P.P., H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, p. 39, Minute by Governor-General, 7 May 1853.

Sir Charles Wood was anxious to have three things, a settled frontier of Pegu, a healthy frontier town not too far off, and a ready communication with Arracan. Dalhousie comforted him, "We have settled the frontier, and have reverted to the healthy town of Meeday, which is not too far off. . . . A communication by the Tounghoop pass has been preserved. As soon as the season permits we shall commence a road, and probably lay a telegraph to Sandoway."⁷⁰

In the middle of 1853, men and material arrived from England. In October the Court of Directors sent its sanction and wrote, "We have only to express our entire concurrence in the selection which you have made of the lines for the electric telegraph."⁷¹

On O'Shaughnessy's arrival he was at once gazetted as the Superintendent of the Electric Telegraph, and his assistants, C. Shepherd, R. L. Brunton, and H. Green, as deputy superintendents in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay respectively. Dalhousie gave O'Shaughnessy wide powers to exercise. He felt it indispensably necessary for the effectual working of a general system that there should be uniformity of management and unity of authority. O'Shaughnessy was, therefore, authorised to recommend the appointment of deputies and inspectors or their removal, and was empowered to submit proposals and suggestions for the further organisation of the telegraph department and for the conduct of business and of accounts there-in as he should deem necessary.⁷²

The work commenced in November 1853. On 17

⁷⁰ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 3 June 1853.

⁷¹ *Telegraph Despatches*, Public Despatch to India, 12 October 1853.

⁷² *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 54, Minute by Governor-General-in-Council, 7 Nov. 1853.

November Dalhousie wrote the following ambitious letter to Charles wood.

"The Electric Telegraph is getting on admirably. Dr. O' Shaughnessy has arrived, and finds all the preparations in a state of advancement which has agreeably surprised him. I shall be much disappointed if I am not enabled to hold a conversation with Madras, Bombay and the Khybar before I quit India. At present I am trying to devise the means of making out a line between Meeaday and Tounghoo in Pegu. It looks almost like building a house from the chimnies downwards to talk of a telegraph in Pegu; but I do not mind being thought a visionary by others as long as I am satisfied of the practical value of what I am about myself; and the practical value in a military point of view of such a communication as that is beyond question."⁷³

In January 1854, O'Shaughnessy left Calcutta to communicate personally with each working party in Bengal, the North-West Provinces and the Punjab for all matters affecting their duties and progress, and to visit Bombay and Madras for the same purpose.⁷⁴ He selected Agra to be the centre of his activities.

Evidence of O'Shaughnessy's labour is found in three letters preserved among the papers of Sir Charles Wood. On 15 January he arrived at Benares, and on his way had "made a careful survey of the whole line from Calcutta to this place", and had arranged for the training of a sufficient number of signallers at Burdwan, Sherghatee and Benares. On 16, he left for Allahabad "to see the whole line" and "to direct the best means for

⁷³ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 17 November 1853.

⁷⁴ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, pp. 43-5, Government of India to Court, 31 March 1854.

placing it in a permanent state".⁷⁵ On 22, he informed the Governor-General from Cawnpore that from Benares to Allahabad the posts had been erected and that from Allahabad to Cawnpore an excellent and substantial flying line had been finished (127 miles), and that the line from Agra to Cawnpore was complete all but 13 miles. "Thus by the first of March the iron line will be up from Saugor Island to Delhi, a result which I confess to you almost takes my breath out", said O'Shaughnessy. Next morning he left for Agra "at day light". "I make day light journeys of about 40 miles taking a note of every post and joint as I proceed." He was truly happy that he received "from every one the most cordial proofs of their desire to aid", and was much more happy to say: "In every district the overseers and police report the entire absence of any disposition to injure or meddle with the lines on the part of the inhabitants or the travellers on the road."⁷⁶ On 27 January he was at Agra. Next day, he waited upon James Thomason, to receive his instructions as to the best locale for the Agra office and depot. This chosen and a class of signallers placed in training, he next prepared to leave for Delhi and Meerut. From Agra he said, "With every drawback, that of my own nervousness into the bargain, I trust to have a prodigious length of line at work, well within three months from this time."⁷⁷

O'Shaughnessy's expectations were justified. On 24 March 1854, a message was transmitted from Agra to Calcutta in two hours. It was sent by O'Shaughnessy to Dalhousie and the latter gave a reply.

⁷⁵ *W. P., I.B.C.*, O'Shaughnessy's Letter, 15 January 1854.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 22 January 1854.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 January 1854.

The same day Dalhousie said, "This evening I have received a message by the Electric Telegraph from the city of Agra. The event is one so nearly of historical importance, and, so manifestly of infinite local consequence that I think it fitting to inscribe the fact upon the records of India."⁷⁸ Three days after, he reported to the Court of Directors, "It is with the highest satisfaction we have to announce to your Honourable Court the completion of the line of electric telegraph from Calcutta to Agra, and the opening of it on the 24th instant, by a message from the Superintendent, Dr. O'Shaughnessy." The event was recorded in a minute, and notified in the Calcutta Gazette.⁷⁹ As a mark of his approbation of the energy and industry manifested in the accomplishment in so short a time of so great a work, Dalhousie sanctioned the grant of double pay, for the month of March to the whole of the establishment employed on the line. In a letter to Couper he said:

"Since my last letter an event has occurred which is of infinite public moment, and which almost deserves to be regarded as historical. In November last, we began to lay the electric telegraph. Five days ago I received a message from Agra—800 miles distant—transmitted in 1 hour and 50 minutes, and I have a few minutes ago read the heads of intelligence of your mail of 24th February by way of Bombay. In a short time we shall complete the line to Bombay, and thus in a few months we shall have reduced the period of communication with England from 35 to 26 days. The results of this in peace or war outrun calculation. I answered their message from Agra by another, to the effect that they

⁷⁸ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xvi, 24 March 1854.

⁷⁹ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, p. 42, Government of India to Court, 27 March 1854.

should all have double pay for the month in which they had completed the line to Agra. The rest all over India will work like elephants in hopes of the same tip.”⁸⁰

It was calculated that during the first week of April the communication would be completed to Bombay, and India would be brought at one stroke eight days nearer to Great Britain. The line to Lahore was progressing. That between Madras and the western presidency was half complete. It was said, “Dr. O’Shaughnessy has kept his word. He began at his right moment, he worked in the right way. He understood exactly how to make his scheme acceptable to the Government; he was trusted, and therefore supported by the Governor-General; he placed a source of popularity at the disposal of the Court of Directors; and finally, as the crowning point and the result of all this, he was let alone.”⁸¹ As a matter of fact O’Shaughnessy had to carry out his own ideas after his own fashion, and with instruments selected by himself. Nevertheless, in spite of innumerable technical difficulties before him, it must not be forgotten that he actually succeeded. As Dalhousie told Wood, it was “very creditable to the energy and the industry of Dr. O’Shaughnessy and his establishment.”⁸² It is certain that the Indian Government worked more efficiently than any private company could have done to introduce the electric telegraph. The government relieved O’Shaughnessy from almost all checks, allowed him to choose his own subordinates and dismiss them without appeal, and to obtain money whenever he wanted it, and according to his need. In short, as regards the telegraph in India, O’Shaughnessy was the

⁸⁰ *P.L.*, p. 293, 30 March 1854.

⁸¹ *F.I.*, 30 March 1854.

⁸² *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 4 April 1854.

government itself. In some quarters it was felt that had Rowland Macdonald Stephenson been invested with a similar authority, the railway would have been at Rajmahal before 1854. "In India, nothing succeeds unless driven by a single hand, wielding for the object designed an almost absolute authority."⁸³

From the beginning the telegraph was utilised by the top men with pleasure and amazement. The opening ceremony of the great Ganges Canal, which Dalhousie could not attend, was enjoyed by him through the electric telegraph. "Yesterday forenoon I received a message by telegraph", wrote Dalhousie, "announcing that the great Ganges Canal had that morning been opened at Roorkee, nearly 1000 miles away. I sent back, 'All honour to Colonel Cautley', which I hope they would get just about the time they were drinking his health after dinner—as the telegraph only goes as far as Meerut. These are great events: a canal opened which measures hundreds of miles, and the occurrence made known 1000 miles off, in a few hours, by machinery only 10 days old in India."⁸⁴

The letters and news from Europe were conveyed in substance to the Governor-General through the telegraph, though they were "meagre as yet through this channel."⁸⁵ Within a short time the lines carried such intelligence to all the presidencies. "We have not yet got the news of the 8th ultimo, by the Express", said John Lawrence from Murree in the Punjab on 17 May 1854, "but the Telegraph tells us that the Russians were over the Danube."⁸⁶ The papers of John Lawrence show

⁸³ *F.I.*, 30 March 1854.

⁸⁴ *P.L.*, p. 296, Dalhousie to Couper, 8 April 1854.

⁸⁵ *P.L.*, p. 297.

⁸⁶ *L.P.*, no. 2a, fos. 255-56.

that the Crimean War and the Middle East complications necessitated speedy exchange of views between the Indian Capital, then at Calcutta, and the North West Frontiers. "I wish there was a rail road", said Lawrence in a moment of anxiety when a difference of opinion with the Governor-General and some others on the Middle East Affairs demanded a personal discussion, but was happy to say that "The Telegraph will be up and working at Lahore by the 1st June 1854."⁸⁷ The Lawrence Papers give evidence that from this time till the end of the Rising of 1857 Lawrence utilised the electric telegraph with very good advantages.

In June, Dalhousie received the official telegraph progress report and said to his friend Couper, "Since 1st November more than 2500 miles of line have been commenced, and completed, and are at work. Have you ever beaten that in the old country? I don't believe they have in the go-ahead new country."⁸⁸ O'Shaughnessy announced to the press that in three months (from June, 1854) the line would be continuous from Saugor Island to Lahore, and from Agra to Bombay, Satara, and Madras, a distance of more than three thousand miles.⁸⁹

O'Shaughnessy felt, to put his own words, "the whole system is as yet in an infantile phase learning how to stand and speak, liable to many a tumble, and often very difficult to be understood, but still full of promise of early proficiency and strength."⁹⁰ He warned the public to be prepared for many interruptions in the

⁸⁷ *L.P.*, no. 2a, fos. 271-73.

⁸⁸ *P.L.*, p. 307, 28 June 1854.

⁸⁹ *Indian News*, 15 August 1854.

⁹⁰ *Hurkaru*, 29 June 1854, Extract from O'Shaughnessy's report to Press.

telegraphic communication, pointed out that the same derangements which he expected in India had occurred in the United States, and drew a comparison between the line from Washington to New Orleans, 1400 miles and the line between Calcutta and Bombay, 1600 miles. Commenting on his report to the press, one of the Indian papers, the *Hurkaru*, said, "History of the world affords no parallel to the rapidity with which electro-telegraphic communication has been established in India. What but twelve months ago appeared a vision—an offspring of excited imagination, has become a reality for which the public are firstly indebted to the exertions of Dr. O'Shaughnessy, and secondly to Government, which supplied the whole of the funds required for the construction."⁹¹

Development of the tele-communication led O'Shaughnessy to think of linking it with the postal system. He proposed to the government that "in accordance with the practice followed in Switzerland, Prussia and France, the post-masters at places not having a telegraph station shall be directed to receive prepaid despatches for transmission by telegraph from the nearest station, the payment to include the anticipated reply, and the amount received to be remitted by the post-master in a treasury order to the head telegraph offices at Calcutta, Agra, Lahore, Indore, Bombay, Bangalore and Madras." Lord Dalhousie in Council concurred with the above view considering that it was of much importance to extend as widely as possible the benefits of the telegraphic communications.⁹²

⁹¹ *Hurkaru*, 29 June 1854.

⁹² *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 6, Minute by Governor-General-in-Council, 11 Aug. 1854.

In the cold season of 1854 the work of extending the line to Prome and Meeaday was taken up. Major J. S. Du Vernet, of the Madras establishment, and formerly attached to the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India was appointed to superintend the proposed line. An establishment of interpreters, clerks, and artificers, was despatched. The government directed a certain Wickham, who first laid down the lines in Pegu, and was still on duty in that quarter, to co-operate with Major Du Vernet, though both were to work independently of each other.⁹³

The progress of the work led Dalhousie to report to Queen Victoria in October 1854: "The work of laying down the Telegraph in India has been rapidly performed. It was begun on 1st November last; and by the 1st of November next regular communication will be opened along 2500 miles of line, connecting Calcutta with Agra, Lahore, Madras and Bombay. By the month of May next it is also hoped that a line of Electric Telegraph will be completed between Rangoon and Meeaday on the Burmese frontier."⁹⁴

In November the line between Bombay and Calcutta was completed. The line to Madras was finished as far as Satara and it was in progress beyond that point.⁹⁵ About the importance of the former line Dalhousie cited an example :

"Orders have been received by the last mail to send the 10th Hussars to Turkey. Two days ago I received a telegraphic message from Bombay asking for instructions on the subject at 7.30 A.M. I communicated with

⁹³ *Hurkaru*, 16 September 1854.

⁹⁴ *D.P.*, no. 397, Letter to Queen, 4 October 1854.

⁹⁵ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 40, pap. no. 243, pp. 48-9.

my four colleagues, one of whom lives four miles off, and sent an answer to Bombay by noon; and I had an answer from Bombay again by 4.30 P.M. Bombay is 1600 miles distant. These messages, therefore, travelled nearly 5,000 miles. The post takes ten days between the two places. Thus in less than one day the Government made communications which, before the telegraph was, would have occupied a whole month. What a political reinforcement is this! And thirteen months ago not a yard of that line was laid."⁹⁶

Towards the end of 1854, O'Shaughnessy was busy in the Punjab and North West Frontiers. He had to face some difficulties in crossing the rivers. The laying down of the cable across the river Sutlej required great skill. But in spite of them his progress was rapid, and Dalhousie noted that "The line from Lahore onwards to Peshawar appears to be proceeding satisfactorily also."⁹⁷ O'Shaughnessy's exertions deserved grateful estimation not only from the government but also from the people, and a very largely-attended and respectable meeting was held at the Metcalfe Testimonial at Agra on 13 December 1854 to open a subscription for the purchase of a piece of plate to be presented to him.⁹⁸

Before the end of the year an Act for regulating the establishment and management of the electric telegraph in India was passed by the Legislative Council and received the assent of the Governor-General on 23 December 1854. On 1 February 1855 it was opened to the public and "was eagerly seized upon by them".⁹⁹ The Telegraph Act was published by the government on

⁹⁶ *P.L.*, p. 331, 9 December 1854.

⁹⁷ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xix, 12 December 1854.

⁹⁸ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 14 February 1855.

⁹⁹ *Indian News*, 21 March 1855.

27 December 1854. In that Act, the government at that time claimed for itself, the monopoly, and for the future the most stringent control over all telegraphs in India. Some felt that the restrictive policy was sound because the telegraph stood on the footing of the post office. Wherever it was set up, it became the most perfect means of communication, it modified the arrangements of trade, and influenced every feature of society. "That such an engine should remain in private hands is repugnant to the instinctive commonsense of mankind. No individual can be allowed to damage at his own pleasure the machinery of national communication."¹⁰⁰

On 3 February 1855, the Governor-General issued a minute: "I have much satisfaction in circulating a letter from the Superintendent of Electric Telegraph, reporting that on the 1st instant he caused the lines to be opened to the public, in accordance with the orders of the Supreme Government. They extend from Calcutta, via Agra, to Bombay, to Madras, and to Attock on the Indus; and they include 41 offices, distributed over 3050 miles of space."¹⁰¹ While announcing the above news to Couper, Dalhousie once more boasted, "The communication between Calcutta and Madras direct by land, a month ago, took twelve days—yesterday a communication was made, round by Bombay, in two hours. Again, I ask, are we such slow coaches out here?"¹⁰²

Since its opening, the electric telegraph began to draw great public attention. The scale of rate which the Governor-General established for private messages

¹⁰⁰ *F.I.*, 4 January 1855.

¹⁰¹ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xx, 3 February 1855.

¹⁰² *P.L.*, pp. 336-37.

was said to be reasonable. A single rate was one rupee for 16 words to a distance of 400 miles. A double rate, two rupees for 800 miles, which included Agra, Allahabad and Cawnpore (from Calcutta); a treble rate was for 1200 miles, which embraced Delhi and Lahore; and a quadruple rate, to Peshawar and Bombay. This rate was cheaper than the rates established elsewhere. For the distance from London to Brussels, about 250 miles, the charge for twenty words was 6 rupees. From London to New Castle, the distance being less than 300 miles, the charge was Rs. 1-8-0. On the American line the charge for a message of twenty words from New York to Washington, 270 miles, was Rs. 2-2-0. In India the charge from Calcutta to Benares, a distance exceeding 400 miles, for sixteen words, was only one rupee.¹⁰³ The object of the government, so was said, was not to make a national revenue out of the telegraph system, but to provide that the telegraph should pay its own expenses. In England at that time the price of a message was exposed to the fluctuations of competition among rival companies. Where there were no rival lines, the charge was said to be exorbitant. The Indian lines however did not suffer from such disadvantages. Agreeing later with the rate established by Lord Dalhousie, the Court of Directors said, "We quite approve of the more liberal construction which you have sanctioned for a message of 16 words, by allowing the name of the sender as well as the date and the address to be exempt from payment."¹⁰⁴

At the beginning of 1855, Dalhousie thought of extending the telegraph lines further. O'Shaughnessy

¹⁰³ *F.I.*, 25 January 1855.

¹⁰⁴ *Telegraph Despatches*, Letter from Court to Government of India, 14 May 1856.

suggested a second line of communication between Calcutta and Bombay, and wanted it to be constructed from Mirzapur by Jabalpur, Nagpur, and Hyderabad to Bangalore, which appeared to Dalhousie as judicious, and he gave to this his provisional sanction.¹⁰⁵

Day by day the Governor-General became more and more accustomed to using the telegraph. The arrival of short telegraphic messages long before the arrival of the mails naturally kept him sometimes in "great anxiety", and this led him once to remark, "This electric telegraph is an instrument of torture."¹⁰⁶ But the telegraph also brought to him news of relief. For instance, for a considerable time past relations with Afghanistan had been poor and it is evident from the letters of Lord Elphinstone to Sir Charles Wood that he himself at Bombay and the Governor-General at Ootacamund were anxious to receive news of the talks of treaty between Sir John Lawrence and Ameer Dost Mohammed. At a time of 'uncertainty' the electric telegraph brought the news from John Lawrence to Calcutta, Bombay and Ootacamund. Receiving the message at Ootacamund, (2300 miles), Dalhousie said, "The pace at which this telegraph message came was good. The news it brought were not less so. On that morning (30th March), it said, the treaty between the British Government and the Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan of Cabul was signed at Peshawar."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xx, 9 February 1855.

¹⁰⁶ *D.P.*, Letters to Governors and Lt. Governors, Dalhousie to Herris, 30 March 1855.

¹⁰⁷ *P.L.*, p. 341.

The message, a copy of which is preserved among the Wood Papers, says, "The treaty with the Ameer of Cabul, Dost Mohammed, was signed this day at 7 A.M. in a public Darbar. In all essential points it is in exact conformity with the draft Articles from Governor (General?)."

When Dalhousie announced to the Court about the opening of the lines to public, he recommended that O'Shaughnessy's salary be increased from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000 per mensem. The directors gave their ready and cordial approval both in acknowledgment of his services, and in consideration of the fact that, had he remained in the mint, he would have been in receipt of a larger salary than he was drawing when the addition under consideration, of Rs. 1000 per month, was made. They spoke in eloquent terms about him:

"Dr. O'Shaughnessy's scientific skill, and knowledge in the first instance, his subsequent zeal and perseverance, and his untiring energy, have enabled him to triumph over the various difficulties which beset his course, and with the support and encouragement so judiciously accorded by... Government, to complete in an unexpectedly short space of time, one of the most important works which have ever been executed in India. He has never shrunk from responsibility or physical labour, but has directed with unfailing ability and vigour the various operations connected with the undertaking."¹⁰⁸

The electric telegraph facilitated the Governor-General and the Governors to keep in touch with their respective headquarters when away from them. Dalhousie, on account of indifferent health, spent a few months in the Nilgiris. On account of his stay there the wire was laid to Ootacamund so that the Governor-General might take advantage of it to obtain recent and

Sirdar Goolam Hydar Khan marches tomorrow to Jumrood and next day to a spot beyond Ali Musjid in the Khybar". (It was received at 20 past 9 A.M.).

W.P., I.B.C., Elphinstone to Wood, 2 April.

¹⁰⁸ *Telegraph Despatches*, Court's Letter to India, 11 July 1855.

regular intelligence from the Government at Calcutta. "The telegraph department should be warned that I will tolerate no delay in the transmission of these messages along the new continuous line", said Dalhousie.¹⁰⁹ For a few months he conducted administrative affairs from the Nilgiris, and at the close of his sojourn expressed his satisfaction with the manner in which the duties of the electric telegraph had been discharged at that station, since the line was opened for his use. "The construction of it was exceedingly rapid and creditable and it has proved of the greatest value and importance in the transaction of public business. The transaction of public intelligence, more especially the mail news from England and regular weekly message from Calcutta, has, upon the whole, been remarkably correct and rapid."¹¹⁰ He recommended that the line be made permanent and maintained.

Lord Elphinstone in Bombay wanted to enjoy a similar facility and ordered the telegraph to be brought into the government houses at Parell and Dapoorie. "I propose", he said to Wood, "to take advantage of the first break in this deluge (referring to heavy monsoon rains) to go to Dapoorie, which is a much drier and cooler climate than Bombay, and the electric telegraph will give me an advantage in transacting business while I am there that none of my predecessors have enjoyed."¹¹¹

In 1855, the idea of joining India with Europe in tele-communication was talked of. So far, the European news, after the arrival of each mail at Bombay, were

¹⁰⁹ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xx, 5 May 1855.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii, 23 October 1855.

¹¹¹ *W.P.*, *I.B.C.*, Elphinstone to Wood, 23 May 1854.

abridged and transmitted through the telegraph to different places in India. This had no doubt great results, and R. Hamilton, the resident at Indore, had given an example of this to Sir Charles Wood thus:

“You will see that the mail arrived in Bombay on the morning of the 23rd ultimo, its intelligence was printed at Indore, Agra and Delhi on that day, and known by night by the Governor-General in Calcutta, and at Lahore, and published to the world in the morning of 24. To people in England this may not appear wonderful but in truth it is a very astonishing fact when the country, the distances and the season (monsoon) are realised.”¹¹²

This reduced distances inside India, but not between Europe and India. It was James Reuter who first submitted a plan for the establishment of a direct and uninterrupted communication between the electric telegraphs in India and those in Europe,¹¹³ and the Court called for from India, opinion as to the arrangements which might be made for carrying out this scheme.¹¹⁴ Upon this O'Shaughnessy informed the Court that this had been done by several eminent mercantile houses in Calcutta and by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce who made their own arrangements for the transmission of despatches between Calcutta, Bombay, Triest, Marseilles and London.¹¹⁵ Such transactions were made through private arrangements. Officially, more than one scheme came for consideration. The constructors of the submarine telegraph completed their line across the

¹¹² *W.P., I.B.C.*, Hamilton to Wood, 8 October 1854.

¹¹³ *Telegraph Despatches, Vide Court's Letter to India*, 3 June 1855.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Extract from O'Shaughnessy's Letter dated 9 April 1855, in Court's Despatch of 17 October 1855.

Mediterranean, and were desirous to extend it to the Indian Peninsular. As far as Suez they were to be supported by the British Government, and from that point, they trusted on the East India Company for official aid.¹¹⁶

Dalhousie and O' Shaughnessy appreciated the value of the Indo-European communication. When the latter received sure information that a submarine telegraph was about to be laid down from Egypt by Aden to Karachi, he asked permission to make immediate commencement of a line from Lahore to Karachi, in order to meet there the submarine line. The Governor-General replied, "No time shall be lost in giving sanction to the commencement of a line in India to meet the submarine line, so soon as the Government has information from the Court of the resolution to form a submarine line, and of the point to which it is to be brought."¹¹⁷

The wire inside India expanded rapidly. In October 1855, the Government of Bombay reported to the Court about the completion and opening of the line between Bombay and Madras, and requested for a line to connect the Mahabaleswar hills with the main system of telegraphs to which the Court gave its sanction.¹¹⁸ In January 1856 the Government of India authorised the temporary line of telegraph from Bangalore to Ootacamund being maintained as a permanent line, and directed that a permanent line be constructed via Mysore, Coorg, Cannanore, and Calicut, in order to afford the means of communication between the eastern and the western coast of Madras.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *F.I.*, 13 September 1855.

¹¹⁷ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xxiii, 19 October 1855.

¹¹⁸ *Telegraph Despatches*, Vide Court's Letter to Bombay, 13 February 1856.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vide Court's Despatch to India, 14 May 1856.

Till the last moment of his administration Lord Dalhousie took interest in the expansion of the electric telegraph. Hardly a month before his departure the Government of Oudh was taken over by the East India Company (on 7 February, 1856). On the same day operations commenced there. To put it in Dalhousie's words,

"As soon as the transfer of the Government of Oude to the East India Company was determined upon, the Superintendent of Electric Telegraph was directed to make preparations for connecting Lucknow with the line at Cawnpore. The Superintendent immediately proceeded to Cawnpore himself.

"The line could not be commenced until the Government should be transferred. The transfer took place on the 7th instant; and on the same day the line was commenced. The Superintendent now reports that it was completed and opened on the 25th instant."¹²⁰

Thus a line of electric telegraph extending over 52 miles, and including a cable of 6000 feet in length across the Ganges, was substantially completed in 18 working days.

It has been seen that by 1 February 1855, O'Shaughnessy was able to notify the opening of all the lines from Calcutta to Agra, and thence to Attock on the Indus, and again from Agra to Bombay, and thence to Madras. These lines included 41 offices, and were extended over 3,050 miles of space. During the course of another year the line was completed to Peshawar, and was extended from Bangalore to Ootacamund.¹²¹ The

¹²⁰ *D.P.*, no. 211, Governor-General's Minutes, Supplementary, 28 Feb. 1856.

¹²¹ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 19.

line from Rangoon to Meeaday was completed on 18th February 1856. The total length of the line was 211 miles, and the total cost, exclusive of wires and cables, was Rs. 48,938. Extension of the line was taken up towards Tounghoo. Major Phayre pointed out with pleasure to the absence of all attempts at wilful injury.¹²²

On 9 February 1856, O'Shaughnessy submitted his last report to the Governor-General in which he stated that 4,000 miles of electric telegraph had been laid down and placed in working order since the month of November 1853. The difficulties which were encountered in the construction of these lines, according to him, were such as had "no existence in the civilised and cultivated countries of Europe."

"Throughout Central India, for instance", said O'Shaughnessy, "the country crossed opposes enormous difficulties to the maintenance of any line. There is no metalled road; there are few bridges; the jungles also in many places are deadly for at least half the year; there is no police for the protection of the lines. From the loose black-cotton soil of Malwa to the rocky wastes of Gwalior, and the precipices of the Sindwa Ghauts, every variety of obstacle has to be encountered."¹²³

Yet the works were carried on, and by the time under consideration, already 70 principal rivers of India had been crossed on the lines, some by cables, others by wires extended between masts. Some of these river crossings required great manoeuvre. The cable across the river Sone measured 15,840 feet; and the crossing of the river Tungabhadra was stated to be not less than two miles in length.

¹²² *Allen's Indian Mail*, 16 June 1856.

¹²³ *D.P.*, no. 102, Report of Superintendent of Telegraphs, 9 February 1856.

The cost of construction and management of the lines was economical. The superintendent showed that the total cost of everything, construction of 4,000 miles, working of all offices for two years, spare stores in hand, instruments, houses, etc., did not exceed 21 lakhs of rupees, or little more than Rs. 500 a mile.¹²⁴ The lines were for the most part substantial in spite of their rapid construction. For three-fourths of the distance from Madras to Calcutta, asserted O'Shaughnessy, the line was superior in solidity to any ever erected elsewhere. On this point, Dalhousie boasted, "On some portions of its length it stands without a rival in the world. For instance, in the Madras Presidency, the line for 174 miles is borne on stone masonry pillars capped with granite, while for 332 miles it is sustained on superb granite, 16 feet high above ground, in single slabs."¹²⁵ To add to the credit, the tariff of charges on the Indian lines was cheaper than that of other countries.*

From the beginning the number of messages sent across the lines betrayed all expectations, and, therefore, the undertaking was supposed to have been 'singularly successful'. The expenses amounted to nearly three lakhs of rupees. The cash receipts in the first year were

¹²⁴ *D.P.*, no. 102, Report of Supdt. of Telegraphs, 9 Feb. 1856.

¹²⁵ *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 20, Dalhousie's Final Minute, 28 February 1856.

* It was stated that in England a message of 20 words sent 400 miles would be charged 5s. The charge in India for 24 words to Benares, 420 miles, was 3s.

Again, in the lines on the continent of Europe, a message of 24 words, sent from London to Trieste, would cost 22s. A similar message of 24 words, sent from Calcutta to Bombay (about the same distance, 1,600 miles, as from London to Trieste), would be 12s.

In the United States of America, a message of 16 words, sent from New York to New Orleans, 2,000 miles, would cost 13s. 6d. A similar message of 16 words, sent from Calcutta to Bangalore, which is more than 2,000 miles, cost only 10s.

Rs. 1,50,000 and this amount was increased to Rs. 2,00,000 by the service messages. Day by day the number of messages and the cash receipts steadily and rapidly increased. The people, it was said, used "the line not only for purpose of trade, but for matters of every description". It could safely be expected that within a short time the telegraph would pay its expenses.¹²⁶

About the efficiency of the Telegraph Department O'Shaughnessy observed,

"I can further establish by facts and official records beyond dispute that the Indian lines have already accomplished performances of rapidity in the transmission of intelligence, which equal that achieved on the American lines. We have repeatedly sent the first bulletin of overland news in 40 minutes from Bombay to Calcutta, 1600 miles. We have delivered despatches from Calcutta to the Governor-General at Ootacamund, during rainy season, in three hours, the distance being 200 miles greater than from London to Sebastopol. We have never failed for a whole year in delivering the mail news from England via Bombay within 12 hours."¹²⁷

Before Dalhousie left India, he obtained permission from the Honourable Court to send William O'Shaughnessy once more to Europe to compile a secret code of signals from the system employed by the Government of France, to enquire into a discovery by Professor Edlund of Stockholm for sending messages simultaneously by a single wire in opposite directions, and to render any assistance which might be required in any contemplated

¹²⁶ *F.I.*, 6 March 1856.

¹²⁷ *D.P.*, no. 102, Report by Superintendent of Telegraphs, 9 February 1856.

arrangements for the use of the Mediterranean line to the purposes of the Indian communication.¹²⁸

As he was leaving India, Dalhousie felt optimistic to see that several new lines were in contemplation inside India itself. The Supreme Government had further expressed its readiness to co-operate with the Government of Ceylon in extending the Indian lines from the presidency of Madras to point de Galle. "And as the Honourable Court", said the Governor-General, "has indicated its willingness to join in any practicable scheme for laying down a submarine telegraph across the Mediterranean and the Indian seas, it may be hoped that the system of electric telegraphs in India may yet one day be united with those which envelop Europe, and which already seek to stretch across the Atlantic Ocean."¹²⁹

Dalhousie had clearly grasped, before he had left India, the political and military advantages which the government of the country derived from the possession of such an engine of power as the electric telegraph. In his last minute he cited "two remarkable instances" which fell within his own immediate knowledge about the political value of the telegraph (Appendix B). Next he went on to conclude:

"I make bold to say that whether regard be had to promptitude of executive action, to speed and solidity of construction, to rapidity of organisation, to liberality of charge, or to the early realisation and vast magnitude of increased political influence in the East, the achievement of the Honourable Company in the establishment

¹²⁸ *Telegraph Despatches, Vide Court's Despatch to India*, 7 November 1855.

¹²⁹ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, pp. 20-21, Dalhousie's Final Minute, 28 February 1856.

of the electric telegraph in India may challenge comparison with any public enterprise which has been carried into execution in recent times, among the nations of Europe, or in America itself."¹³⁰

Lord Canning arrived in India on 28 January 1856. His arrival was communicated to the ailing Dalhousie by a telegraphic message. He said to Couper,

"On Monday evening....I received the following message: 'Bombay, 28th January, 6-30 p.m., Lord Canning landed'. So there was my notice to quit come at last, and by quick travelling too—1600 miles in three hours. It gives me a queer feeling."¹³¹

In a farewell address to Dalhousie, it was said, "The electric telegraph is, if we may use the expression, entirely your Lordship's own. To your Lordship's sagacious appreciation we are indebted for its first introduction; and the rapidity with which it has been brought into operation and extended is entirely due to Your Lordship's vigorous and energetic administration."¹³² It was perhaps appropriately commented that "If the plan of the telegraph was suggested by Dr. O'Shaughnessy, it was Lord Dalhousie who gave him the support, the strong, personal, energetic help, without which the suggestion would have remained a well written pamphlet."¹³³

Lord Dalhousie left India, but his work was not over. On 25 May 1856, he wrote to his friend from the Dolphin Hotel, Southampton, "I forget whether I told

¹³⁰ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, pp. 20-21, Dalhousie's Final Minute, 28 February 1856.

¹³¹ *P.L.*, pp. 368-69.

¹³² *D.P.*, no. 93, Papers concerning Tribute to Dalhousie on his leaving India.

¹³³ *Indian News*, 18 April 1856.

you that General Cubbon has got his K.C.B. I am now going to fight for O'Shaughnessy and Stephenson."¹³⁴ He succeeded in bringing honour to those two gentlemen.

The coming of the telegraph into India was rather sudden. Within a few years of its introduction most of the cities and towns were linked by wires. To the urban population, and especially to business communities everywhere, the barriers of distance seemed less apparent. This developed trade and commerce rapidly.

In America by that time, it was said, the telegraph had already proved itself "to be a new and most powerful bond of union for the heterogeneous materials of a confederacy attached together only by the feeble ligaments of republican institutions."¹³⁵ A similar or even a greater role was expected of the electric means of communication in India. Whatever suspicion the telegraph aroused in India during the Rising of 1857 (the Sepoys destroyed 918 miles of telegraph wire causing a damage of 5 lakhs of rupees), among the people in general it was never seen to be unpopular. On the other hand, its extensive use by the people very shortly led the government to look upon it in the light of a post office.

¹ *P.L.*, p. 375.

² *F.I.*, 18 April 1850.

CHAPTER V

The Reform of the Postal System.

On the history of the postal system during the British administration, three notable writers, Ananda Gopal Sen, J. Hamilton, and Geoffrey Clarke, all having been directly associated with the working of the system at different times, have contributed valuable works.* But Ananda Gopal Sen and J. Hamilton tried to sketch the history of the postal system in many countries of the world from the earliest times, and in the same strain its history in ancient, medieval and modern India. Geoffrey Clarke, while confining his subject to British India, traced the administrative aspects of the Indian posts from Robert Clive to the Great War of 1914 and dealt with varied subjects relating to the post, such as, the Banks, Post Office Building, Postal Routes, Field Post Office during the War, and Postage Stamps etc. Consequently, all the three failed to narrate how the modern postal system was instituted in India, and perhaps no one else has attempted it in a serious way. The object of this chapter is to show how and under what circumstances Lord Dalhousie effected reform in the existing system of postal communication and gave to India the benefit of a uniform half-anna postage.

As early as 1766, Lord Clive had introduced into

* a. Ananda Gopal Sen, *The Post Office of India*, (Calcutta, 1875).

b. J. Hamilton, *An Outline of Postal History and Practice with a History of the Post Office of India*, (Calcutta 1910).

c. Geoffrey Clarke, *The Post Office of India and its Story*, (London, 1921).

the British conquered territories a type of postal system to carry the government letters. During the time of Warren Hastings the system was improved and the posts were opened for private communications. But these early arrangements can by no means be regarded as a general postal system for the country. From the time of Clive to that of Bentinck, the post office was not regarded as a department of public utility. At many places the letters were carried through private organisations. Some such private systems were well organised, but the cost of sending letters through them was high, and everything else was uncertain and full of risks.

It was Lord William Bentinck who, among the Governors-General, gave some attention to the postal communication. On 25 February 1834, he wrote from Bangalore "The suggestions....for consolidating and identifying the Post Office Regulations of the three Presidencies, and for generally improving the system, of which the formation of good roads, is almost a necessary preliminary, is a measure of such obvious utility, that I hope it will form one of the earliest subjects of consideration, of the Council of India."¹ Copies of instructions were issued to a Commission of Civil Servants appointed by Bentinck to examine and report on the Post Office Laws.²

Under Bentinck's successor the Post Office Act was passed in 1837. This Act aimed at a general postal system for the whole country, but it was full of defects. No stamp was introduced, and so postage was paid in cash. No central authority was instituted to control the system, and hence local arrangements continued. No

¹ *Vide Revision of Customs, Laws of India, 1834-38.*

² *P.P., H.C., 1851, vol. xli, pap. no. 151, p. 3, Copies of Instructions by Bentinck, 1 April 1835.*

uniformity was suggested and therefore the rates varied according to weight and distance. Far from being satisfactory itself, the Act caused a great deal of dissatisfaction among the people because it abolished private services. It allowed the system of franking to continue and did not abolish bearing. The Act, as it was pointed out in some quarters, was inconvenient to the department and in many respects, "an unmitigated nuisance" to the public.³

While the condition of the postal system in India remained thus, Sir Rowland Hill, the inventor of the penny postage, between 1837 and 1840, effected far reaching changes in the postal system of England. But for at least a decade, the Government of India did not think of experimenting with the Hill system in India.

During this period, the postal system continued to work in the most unsatisfactory manner. Captain N. Staples, while making observations on the Indian Post Office before 1850 saw the charges on letters as "most oppressive."⁴ The contractors who worked as the agency to carry letters satisfied neither the government nor the people. Not to speak of the conditions of postal communication in undeveloped areas where there was no good roads, its condition in the most developed part of India, from Calcutta to Benares connected by the Grand Trunk Road, was deplorable. Even on this line the government left the conveyance of mails to the contractors whose "neglect and mismanagement" made the system ridiculous. After several contract systems had worked on the line between 1839 and 1845, W. Tayler, the officiating post-master general, declared them

³ *F.I.*, 22 June 1848.

⁴ N. Staples, *Observations on the Indian Post Office*, (1850), p. 2.

as "miserable failures" and proposed their abolition.⁵

While the conveyance of mails was uncertain, corruption in the department was rampant. The post-master general of the North West Provinces under whose jurisdiction the line from Benares to Calcutta worked, complained in 1843, "Our native clerks, being virtually uncontrolled in collecting postage and rendering accounts of it, cannot be made checks on themselves. None but persons identified with them in interest and feeling know how much money they receive or whether the amount of it is truly recorded in the books of the office."⁶ This was on account of maintaining the system of cash payment for letters instead of payment through stamps. Five years later, the successor of the above post-master general, H. B. Riddell, complained in still more clear terms that "the most simple and perfect protection against embezzlement of the Post Office collections and also as a great boon to the public, I would urge the adoption of a low uniform rate of postage prepared by stamps."⁷ He asked the government to prohibit the receipt of cash at any post office.

The cash payment for letters tempted the postal clerks to irregularity and fraud, and led the entire department, so it was said, to great inefficiency and untrustworthiness.⁸ Innumerable letters, duly paid for, never reached the addressees. In one case of a searching inquiry into the house of a postal writer, made by the Post-Master General of the North West Provinces at

⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 31, *Vide* Report from J. P. Grant, 4 September 1850.

⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 42, *Vide* Note from Post-Master General of N.W.P., 14 October 1848.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 2 February 1848.

Saharanpur, no less than 515 letters were found which had never been delivered. It was also discovered that several bhanchy parcels had been purloined. It was supposed that "if other offices were subjected to the same scrutiny, abuses equally striking would be discovered."⁹

The defect of the system led Sir Herbert Maddock, the Deputy Governor of Bengal, to think of its radical improvement in 1845-46, and it was said that he seemed "to have resolved to render his administration memorable by a Reform in the Post Office, exceeding the most sanguine expectations of the public." A plan for establishing an anna post, corresponding with the penny post of England, was drawn up and publicly announced in India, and duly transmitted to the Court of Directors in England. It involved an immediate risk of loss. The Court refused to agree to so wild and costly a proposition.¹⁰

The grave abuse in the postal system of India seems to have been first brought to the notice of Lord Dalhousie by James Thomason, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Provinces. Thomason, after much consideration, was himself convinced that "the substitution of stamps for money payments is the only effectual and practical check on the admitted irregularities to the present system."¹¹ He wanted to have an experiment with a system of uniform postage at Lucknow and asked for the Governor-General's opinion on the proposed trial. Dalhousie was then in a camp near Ambala conducting the Sikh War. From there he informed

⁹ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 2 February 1848.

¹⁰ *F.I.*, 14 March 1850.

¹¹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 42, *Vide* Letter from Secy. to Govt. of N.W.P., 23 October 1848.

Thomason on 11 December 1848, "Personally I am favourable to a system of uniform postage rate", and agreed on the advantage of Lucknow being the scene of first trial.¹²

In March 1849, R. N. C. Hamilton, the resident at Indore, sent some proposals for the consideration of the Governor-General. He said, "Although it may not be expedient at present to reduce the postage levied upon letters sent through the Government Post Offices still I trust it will be considered desirable to secure to the Government the whole of the payments on account of postage made by the public, and to prevent the revenue being defrauded. These results can only be attained by the adoption of Post Office stamps of one, two, four and eight annas value, and by abolishing all cash receipts for letters at any post office. . . . The privilege of sending bearing letters should be abolished."¹³ He suggested abolition of all postages less than one anna and of all postages above 8 annas. The newspapers, too, clamoured for a reform. The *Friend of India*, a missionary paper from Serampore, commented, "It would assuredly be a great boon to the country, if Government would reduce the extraordinary charge for postage on letters and newspapers. . . . It is a concession to the general convenience of society which a Government, availing itself of the advantages of the public post without paying for them, to the extent which the Government of India does, ought not, on the principle of justice and equity, to refuse."¹⁴

¹² D.P., Miscellaneous Letters to Persons in India and Europe, vol. i, Dalhousie to Thomason, 11 December 1848.

¹³ I.H.C., 187/vol. 42, Letter from R. N. C. Hamilton to Secretary with Governor-General, 13 March 1849.

¹⁴ F.I., 29 March 1849.

After the annexation of the Punjab, a good deal of inconvenience was felt in that part of India regarding the dak. As Dalhousie himself said, "Nothing can be worse than the condition of the Post Office on the frontier", and he, in his own words, "made it the subject of notice and complaint to the Lieutenant-Governor (Thomason)."¹⁵ Sir Henry Lawrence asked for some immediate remedy, and Dalhousie replied to him from Simla in May 1849, "I should fear that it is not likely to be improved in the new country beyond, unless the screw is put on." But the Governor-General called for a definite plan for the Punjab, and prepared to discuss the subject with Thomason, and the post-master general, Riddell, both of whom were then at Simla with him.¹⁶

The matchless improvements which had been made in the post office arrangements in England raised expectations in the minds of some that some effort should be made to give India the benefit of those principles of improvement, which were thought to be within the reach of the government. It was in the Punjab that the first experiment was made on a reduced postage and an efficient government control. The proposal for a "diminution of the rate of postage in the new territory" came from Riddell, and Dalhousie, after serious consideration, gave his assent to it. He issued a minute on the post office in the Punjab on 12 June 1849,

"Having regard to the peculiar circumstances under which the correspondence is at present carried on with distant stations in the Punjab, I think it reasonable that

¹⁵ *D.P.*, Letters to Lahore, vol. i, Dalhousie to Henry Lawrence, 9 May 1849.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

a reduced rate of postage should be demanded by the Government."¹⁷

He approved of Riddell's estimate of the expenses of the establishment in that new territory.

While Dalhousie gave his attention to the improvement of the postal system in the Punjab, elsewhere in India and especially in the Deccan, conditions remained bad. The government left the establishments in the hands of the private contractors who failed in most parts. Only a few could succeed with much perseverance in carrying the dak. The contractors had to face grave dangers, their "stables would be burnt, grass ricks fired, riders occasionally beaten and grain depots plundered."¹⁸ Such incidents happened because the government gave them no protection, and the public, had no faith in them since they were private establishments. An extract of a memorandum by Captain Hart, post-master general in the Deccan, dated July 1849, shows how the most successful among the contractors worked.*

¹⁷ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. ii, 12 June 1849.

¹⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 30, Memorandum by Captain Hart, July 1849.

* The extract runs, "The question of granting the contract from Poona to Nagpore, requires grave consideration. This road has been by degrees opened by Pestonjee Sorabjee, who commenced carrying the mails in 1836 with three horses from Poona to Aurangabad, and gradually extended his operations to Nagpore, having now on the road 56 stations with 8 horses at each. In bringing his establishment to its present efficient state he has had serious difficulties to contend with, the support of wealthy men of his own tribe confident in his energy and perseverance, has alone enabled him in both good and bad seasons to act up to the terms of his agreement. From Jaulna to Nagpore, the line runs through the wildest districts of that Raja's and the Nizam's territories... It has required and still requires the greatest tact on the part of the contractor's people to keep clear of the constant quarrels which take place between different villages; and to rely on themselves and not on the Government for protection."

After the Punjab war Dalhousie went out on a wide tour to Bombay, Colombo, Galle, Singapore, Malacca, Penang and Moulmein, and could not give his attention to the subject. On his return it was expected that measures for reform would be adopted without delay. It was said, "Owing to the universal complaint of the community regarding the abuses of the police, that Lord Dalhousie was laid to appoint Commissioners of Police enquiry, and the general dissatisfaction which has been so long and uninterruptedly manifested regarding the delays, the insecurity, and the irregularity of the Post Office, creates the same kind of necessity for enquiry and amendment. . . . The Post Office system of India is behind the age. It is natural and just expectation of the public that it should be kept abreast of the age."¹⁹ The newspapers created an opinion in favour of reform and demanded for themselves a general reduction on the charges for their conveyance. Some of them described the charges as prohibitive duties saying that, "The subscriber paying say thirty rupees a year for his paper, which he may not grudge, has other thirty to pay for postage upon it, which he does grudge, as so much of his substance sacrificed to bad government. He knows that this heavy impost is laid on him, in order to enable the Government to have all its post-office and carriage business conducted gratis, and, while the rate presses so injuriously on himself, he is not easily satisfied that no share of the burden should be borne by the Government."²⁰ In England, by 1850, books could be despatched to any county district, at the rate of 40 miles an hour, and at 6d. a pound, whereas in India, it was said, books were sent to the post towns only, at two

¹⁹ *F.I.*, 14 March 1850.

²⁰ *Athenaeum*, 6 July 1850.

miles an hour, for an indefinite charge, but on a general average, at one-half the value of the work itself.²¹

Dalhousie saw that too much was expected by those who advocated in favour of an entire change of the system. There were some who demanded for the accomplishment of their wishes a greater and more sudden sacrifice of the public revenue. But the Governor-General felt "Without carrying change to an extreme and without undue sacrifice of present income, the system is, in my humble opinion, capable of such improvement as would very greatly add to its speed, its economy and certainty."²²

By March 1850, the Governor-General had recommended for an experiment on the electric telegraph; and had ordered it to be "done without delay". Almost simultaneously, he took decision to reform the post. He thought of a "uniform low rate of postage which has for one time been established in England" or some other system "which shall approximate to the English system as closely as the different condition and circumstances of the two countries will allow", and wanted to make the system applicable to whole of the British territories in India. With this motive the Governor-General issued his minute on the post office reform on 15 April 1850. He declared,

"The inferiority of the postal system in India and the unsatisfactory manner in which that department of the public service is found to work in every Presidency, has long been made a subject of complaint by the community, and the justice of their complaints has not been, and cannot be, denied by the Government."²³

²¹ *F.I.*, 7 February 1850.

²² *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. iv, 15 April 1850.

²³ *Ibid.*

As an effective step towards the intended reform, Lord Dalhousie decided to appoint a commission to examine into the post office system, and to report to the government upon the various defects, and finally to suggest remedies which might appear to the commissioners to be feasible. He thought it better to appoint three commissioners for the three presidencies. For the presidency of Bengal, he made his own selection. "I know no gentleman better qualified for such a task than Mr. Cecil Beadon, or who could command more general confidence."²⁴ For the other two presidencies, he asked the Governments of Madras and Bombay to appoint a commissioner each in the like manner and for the like purposes. Beadon was relieved from his duties as the secretary to customs board during his employment on the postal enquiries.

Dalhousie once described himself as a "despot for many radical changes", and perhaps so he was. "All the commissioners should be directed to enter on their duties immediately and to submit their reports to Governments with as little delay as possible" was the order from him.²⁵ The Governments of Madras and Bombay appointed H. Forbes and W. Caurtney to enquire into the matter in those two presidencies respectively.²⁶

With this Dalhousie felt that he had started a large experiment on the post office reform.²⁷ Since it was meant for the whole of India, he called for the assistance of the presidency governors. To the Lord Viscount Falkland, the Governor of Bombay, he made a special

²⁴ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. iv, 15 April 1850.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *D.P.*, no. 99.

²⁷ *P.L.*, p. 119.

request for his best aid in the matter and called for his suggestions.²⁸

The intention of the Governor-General was not merely to imitate the British system and apply it to the Indian conditions, but to derive examples from some other European countries where the modern systems were at work. In the case of the electric telegraph he gave William O'Shaughnessy an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the English, the continental, and even the American system and modes of construction before the lines had been laid in India. Similarly, in case of the postal communication, he called for documentary and other information regarding postal reforms in the Western countries.²⁹ The experiment of the Governor-General drew the attention of Sir Rowland Hill who sent a number of pamphlets on the subject with a letter in explanation of the documents. On receipt of those papers, Dalhousie forwarded them to Cecil Beadon saying, "These may probably be of use to you during the enquiry into the Post Office of Bengal in which you are engaged; and I send them begging that they may be returned to me when your enquiry is over."³⁰

The enquiry began simultaneously in Bengal, Bombay and Madras. But no commissioner was appointed for the North West Provinces which led Thomason to complain. Dalhousie, therefore, wanted to include North West Provinces within the jurisdiction of Cecil Beadon and said to him:

²⁸ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to Various Persons in India, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Falkland, 3 May 1850.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Dalhousie to Beadon, 3 June 1850.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

"The Lieutenant Governor thinks there would be great advantage in your enquiring into the Post Office Department in these provinces as well as Bengal. I think, too, and my only objection arises from a consideration of the delay which it would probably occasion in the submission of your report. Some delay I would not object to. Instead of writing officially I ask privately whether you can form any notion of how long your enquiry will occupy you in the Lower Provinces and whether you can give me an opinion as to whether your undertaking the Upper Provinces also would occasion undue delay? And how long both jobs would engage you."⁸¹

Cecil Beadon was earnest in his work. By June 1850 he could inform the Governor-General that he had already sketched the outline of an enquiry which, when filled up, would be a very complete one. In the circumstances he thought himself able to comply with Thomason's wish and prosecute enquiry under his government as well as in Bengal.⁸² In a private letter to him Dalhousie expressed his happiness when he heard of this.

The commissioners had been asked "to report their opinion on the practicability of forming such a plan as should be applicable to the whole of the British territories in India." To make this practicable, Cecil Beadon was in frequent communication with the commissioners for Bombay and Madras on almost every point of interest and importance connected with the object, but although considerable material advantage resulted from such interchange of opinions, the commissioners in

⁸¹ Dalhousie to Beadon, 3 June 1850.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 28 June 1850.

the course of time felt the necessity of meeting together to compare the results of enquiries in the several presidencies, to deliberate on points of difficulty and doubt and to draw up a combined report on the whole subject for the consideration of the government.³³ Dalhousie at first thought of this suggestion as to have been made a little prematurely, but agreed to such a meeting whenever their respective enquiries were completed of which he wished to be informed in good time.³⁴ Beadon told the Governor-General that his enquiry in Bengal would be concluded by January 1851 which would enable him to profitably meet the other commissioners at Calcutta. He thought the Bombay Commissioner to have been equally advanced in his work, though he was not so sure about the Madras man. On his anxiety for a joint meeting, Dalhousie assured him from Amritsar to immediately send instructions to the other two to repair to Calcutta.³⁵

The commissioners, in the course of their enquiry, called for suggestions from many quarters. An important suggestion came to them from the Calcutta Trade Association which appointed a special committee of its own to suggest the means of improvement. The special committee suggested the following: a uniform postage of half an anna per $\frac{1}{4}$ tola, acceleration and improved conveyances for the dak, greater facilities for receipt and delivery of letters, permanency of the post-master general, the system of pre-payment, the use of

³³ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 33, Letter from commissioner for Post Office Enquiry, Bengal, to Government, 14 September 1850.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter from Secretary with Governor-General, 14 October 1850.

³⁵ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to Various Persons in India, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Beadon, 20 November 1850.

stamps instead of money payments, a continuation of the system of granting receipts when required, the adoption of post office money orders, the abolition of franking, payment for government correspondence, reduction of the weight of government letters, the appointment of village postmen, and putting down private daks by legislative enactment.³⁶ Various suggestions came from other quarters too for the consideration of the government while the enquiry proceeded, but the government made it clear that pending the result of the enquiries of the post office commissioners, it was unwilling to entertain any proposition of reform partaking of a general nature.³⁷ A similar view was expressed by Lord Dalhousie personally in a private letter. He said to John Littler from Lahore, "My views as to the Post Office coincide with those which you have expressed.... In the meantime I think the course I have suggested.... is the best, namely, to decide nothing till the report of the commissioners is given in."³⁸

After the Governor-General had satisfied himself that the works of the commissioners were sufficiently advanced to admit of their joint deliberation, he fixed the time of their meeting on 1 February 1851, or as soon after it as might be practicable and convenient, and asked the Governments of Bombay and Madras to depute their commissioners to Calcutta.³⁹

The commissioners carried out a thorough and

³⁶ *F.I.*, 17 October 1850.

³⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 31, Letter from Govt. of Bengal to Cecil Beadon, 28 October 1850.

³⁸ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Littler, 2 December 1850.

³⁹ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. v, 16 December 1850.

elaborate investigation. They took into consideration all the schemes of post office reforms previously submitted to the government at different times. Those schemes included the proposals of the post-masters general of Bengal, Madras, Bombay and the North West Provinces; the proposals of the Bombay Government and the Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Provinces; the proposal of the Governor-General Lord Hardinge; and the observations of R. N. C. Hamilton and Lieutenant N. Staples. The commissioners took evidence from such experienced persons on the postal affairs as W. Tayler, H. B. Riddell, A. W. Ravenscroft, and J. R. B. Bennett.⁴⁰ They took opinions of the post-masters in all the presidencies. They called for suggestions from such interested bodies as the Calcutta Traders' Association and the Madras Chamber of Commerce. The mahajans of Mirzapur and Agra, the merchants of the North West Provinces, the tradesmen at the presidency towns and elsewhere gave their evidences too. Numerous private persons were consulted and examined. Persons of different shades and status, such as, a partner of a Parsee firm, a gomastha of the house of a banker, a vakeel of the sudder court, a resident of Calcutta, a jeweller and cloth-merchant of Murshidabad, or an agent at Benares for a navigation company, all spoke before the commissioners.⁴¹ All who appeared for evidence, beginning from an expert to a lay man, pleaded in favour of a low uniform postage.

The commissioners divided their subject into eight heads: Postage on Letters, Postage on Newspapers,

⁴⁰ They were the Post-Masters General of Bengal, the N.W.P., Bombay, and the Deputy Post-Master General of Bengal respectively.

⁴¹ *Report of Commissioners for Post Office Enquiry*, (Calcutta, 1851), paras. 35-56.

Postage Stamps, Prepayment, Franking, General Management, the Bhanghy, and District Daks.

Their primary object was to ascertain whether a low uniform postage on letters, such as had been adopted in the United Kingdom, was applicable to India, and after the enquiry they said, "uniformity of postage, without reference to distance, is recommended by its simplicity, by its fairness, and by the facilities it gives for the introduction of other improvements into the department." Combined with a low rate of charge, so thought the commissioners, it formed the conspicuous and chief benefit which the monopoly of the carriage of letters enabled the government to confer upon the whole body of its subjects, by almost annihilating distance, and placing it within the power of every individual to communicate freely with all parts of the empire. "It makes the Post Office what under any other system it can never be, the unrestricted means of diffusing knowledge, extending commerce, and promoting in every way the social and intellectual improvement of the people."⁴²

It was no longer thought to be an experiment, having been introduced with eminent success in the United Kingdom, as well as in the United States, France, Spain and Russia. In the United Kingdom, the number of chargeable letters, passing through the post office in 1838, was 77,500,000 and the number of franks 7,000,000, making in all 84,500,000. This increased to 346,000,000 in 1850, an increase of upwards of 300 per cent. in ten years from the date on which the penny postage was established. Judging from these points and justifying their decision with facts and statistics, the commissioners recommended the adoption of the

⁴² *Report of Commissioners for P. O. Enquiry*, (Cal., 1851), para. 34.

half anna uniform rate on all letters not exceeding $\frac{1}{4}$ tolah in weight without reference to distance.⁴³

About the postage on newspapers the commissioners with their own arguments did not recommend any reduction in the rates. They recommended for the introduction of the postage stamps on the following ground. "Not only would they have the effect of rendering the realisation of postage on all letters far more secure and certain than it now is, but they would tend, in a still greater degree, to ensure the safety of letters once posted, and likewise protect them in their passage to the post office from the dishonesty of servants. Letter boxes could be universally substituted for the present cumbersome and tardy method of receiving letters at a window, while the operations of weighing, taxing, sorting and despatching letters as well as of re-sorting and delivery would be much more expeditiously performed."⁴⁴

About the system of pre-payment, they advocated that the most perfect system of post office management, and the safest both for the public and the department, would be the compulsory prepayment of all letters by means of stamps, with the entire exclusion of all money payments; but at the same time they could not completely rule out the system of sending letters bearing, and provided that the bearing letters should be charged double. This rule was followed in the United Kingdom. The commissioners agreed that the privilege of franking was abused, and therefore they limited it to a very small circle.

On the question of general management, they re-

⁴³ *Report of Commissioners for P. O. Enquiry*, (Cal., 1851), para. 88.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 1331.

commended the constitution of the post office throughout India as a distinct department supervised by an officer styled the director general of the post office of India, under the immediate control of the government. The commissioners did not favour any reduction in the rates of the bhanghy parcels, but they much simplified the existing scales of charge. Lastly they recommended for the improvement of the district daks.

The report of the commissioners covered 125 foolscap pages, and the appendices made about four times as much. On 1 May 1851, they submitted their joint report before F. J. Halliday, secretary to the Government of India in the home department.

Dalhousie was then at Simla. How much anxious he was to receive and deal with the report is known from what he wrote to Halliday on 16 July. "You are quite mistaken. I am very anxious to deal with the Post Office Report before I come to Calcutta, so as if possible to get some reply from the Court to whom it must go, before I leave India. So do not let them sit upon it till they addle it in Calcutta."⁴⁵ At this time Dalhousie seriously thought of leaving India and wanted to finalise the matter before his expected departure.

When the report of the commissioners became public it was pointed out that, this "social improvement will prove a greater boon to the million, and produce a greater and more beneficial change in the habits and comforts of native society, than any measure which the British Government has adopted since its first establishment." It was also said that "no act of Lord Dalhousie's Government will so serve to render it memorable, or

⁴⁵ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Halliday, 16 July 1851.

associate the remembrance of it with such lively feelings of gratitude, as this arrangement for a cheap and uniform postage."⁴⁶

There was an apprehension that the government might not accept the recommendation for a half anna rate which meant an immediate loss of revenue to the extent of nine lakhs of rupees.⁴⁷ But it was also expected that this sum might be amply made up in the course of a very short period, by the rapid increase of correspondence. In order to introduce a uniform penny postage in England, the British Government risked a revenue of one million out of fifty-four million sterling. It was expected that the Government of India would risk only 90,000 out of gross income of 27,000,000 sterling.⁴⁸ Some were optimistic about the increase of correspondence which was expected to follow the introduction of a low rate. In England, the number of letters increased 300 per cent. in ten years through the penny post. Judged from such results it could be hoped that the establishment of half-anna postage might not lead to a risk of nine lakhs, but might be considered as the only mode by which the post office revenue might increase.⁴⁹

Dalhousie took some time to form his opinion. The views expressed by the commissioners were not binding on him. Before the report came to his hand, he had said, "I should not feel myself bound to abide strictly by their recommendations."⁵⁰ And so he did. He accepted the recommendations in most parts, but went

⁴⁶ *Indian News*, 18 October 1851.

⁴⁷ *Report of the Commissioners for Post Office Enquiry*, (Calcutta, 1851), para. 115.

⁴⁸ *Indian News*, 18 October 1851.

⁴⁹ *F.I.*, 16 October 1851.

⁵⁰ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, Dalhousie to Littler, 2 December 1850.

beyond them where he thought it necessary. "The Report of the Commissioners", said Dalhousie, "has been for some time in my hands. I have most carefully studied it and have very cautiously and deliberately considered several important changes which it has recommended the Government of India to adopt."⁵¹

Two things lay before him to do. First, to convince the Court of the justice and necessity of carrying into effect the reform which the commissioners had suggested; and next, to obtain sanction to introduce it promptly and fully.

He said to the Court, "Years have passed since the inequality and injustice of such a system were recognised and remedied in Great Britain by the Imperial Parliament. The experience that has been gained of the operation of the new system of low and uniform postage gives good ground for the hope that the gradual increase of the postal revenue which has gone on steadily from year to year will ultimately make good the whole deficiency which was actually produced by the large and sudden reduction of charge. The United States of America, France, Spain and Portugal have subsequently carried the same measure into effect, and with the United States on which alone there is sufficient information before me, the change has been financial success."⁵² To Dalhousie, as it was wise in England to remove every obstacle to free communication between man and man, to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and to correct with all prudent speed a sensible and admitted grievance, wisdom dictated the same liberality in legislation in India.

⁵¹ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. ix, 30 December 1851.

⁵² *Ibid.*

The objection founded on the alleged difference in circumstances between England and India seemed to be an error, and the Governor-General in his minute requested the directors for permission to introduce a uniform rate of half an anna on every letter for whatever distance it might be conveyed. He recommended such other proposals of the commissioners as the compulsory use of stamps in all cases of prepayment and the enforced payment of letter postage by means of a double charge on unpaid letters, etc.

But Dalhousie objected to the decision of the commissioners as regards the postage on the newspapers was concerned. The commissioners had said that "at all events not less than two annas be charged on every copy of a certain weight". Dalhousie rejected this view. He conceived that the government could not fairly refuse to lower the postage on newspapers upon the plea that the cost of conveying each copy exceeded the postage charge such copy was intended to bear. To him, the question was to be considered from the point of public utility. The circulation of newspapers in India had a great value because they contained much useful information, extracted largely from the European press on all subjects, political, literary and domestic. They conveyed knowledge on local subjects from one presidency to another. Although the tone of many of them and their treatment of public questions, according to Dalhousie, were frequently open to objection, still he felt that a free consideration of all public questions was in itself good. "It is everywhere good for all public men and all public bodies that they and their measures should be discussed. It is especially so in India where the operation of public opinion is of necessity less sensibly

felt than in England", said the Governor-General.⁵³ He recommended a uniform rate of one anna for each copy as the proper charge.

The administrative aspect of the Indian post office received his careful consideration and he decided that the post office throughout India should be constituted as a department immediately under the orders of the Supreme Government. On its financial aspects he had no doubt that the immediate loss of about nine lakhs of rupees would be made good of by a natural increase of correspondence. The calculations showed that an increase of 147 per cent. was necessary to make good this entire deficiency and Dalhousie thought, if a partial reduction of postage in 1839 resulted in an increase of correspondence in the first year to more than 100 per cent. and in nine years to 150 per cent., then the required increase would take place in a very short period and that the income of the post office would eventually exceed the expenditure.

Dalhousie's personal interest and enthusiasm is known from what he said to the Court in concluding his recommendations. "If I were vested with authority so to do I should at once carry into effect the recommendations of the Commissioners notwithstanding the responsibility which such an act would involve".⁵⁴ The Court's previous order not to adopt any final arrangements did not allow him to do anything at once.

The work of the commissioners was over. They received the most cordial thanks from the Governor-General for the very able and admirable report and for

⁵³ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. ix, 30 December 1851.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

their praiseworthy execution of the difficult and laborious task which was committed to them.⁵⁵

A few days later, Dalhousie noted in his diary: "Besides these several weighty questions (referring to political issues) others of less anxiety but not of less consequence have occupied much of my attention. Foremost among these is the question of Post Office. Lately I recorded a minute embodying my sentiments on the report of the Post Office Commissioners. I advised the Court to sanction the cheap and uniform rate of postage, including also newspapers, which the Commissioners had excluded; and to permit me to remodel the system as has been suggested. I am firm in my conviction that no ultimate loss of the present revenue would be incurred, while an immeasurable boon would be conferred upon the community in all its interests, social, literary, commercial and political."⁵⁶

Dalhousie's estimate that the commissioners did not do justice to the newspapers was correct. A memorial was submitted to the Governor-General-in-Council on behalf of the proprietors and editors of the English journals against the recommendations of the commissioners. The rate of newspaper postage was 2 annas a cover weighing $3\frac{1}{2}$ tolahs to a distance of 400 miles, and three annas for all papers of similar weight which were transmitted to a further distance. Thus, where a journal was published daily at the subscription price of rupees 64 a year, the annual cost of postage to the three anna stations was rupees 68. The tendency of this system, it was said, was to isolate the various divisions of the empire, to give the

⁵⁵ The Commissioners were thanked in a special minute issued by the Governor-General on 30 December 1851.

⁵⁶ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1852, part i, 13 January 1852.

organs of public opinion an exclusively local character, and fetter them by local prejudices and associations, and to interfere with the adoption of those comprehensive views which give dignity and value to the press as an instrument of public instruction. The memorialists pointed out then that about 14 years ago, the Governor-General Lord Auckland appointed a commission in Calcutta and at the recommendation of that commission, the charge on the conveyance of newspapers was considerably reduced, by which the convenience of the public was promoted, and a large increase of circulation was obtained. Since that period, the improvements made in the post office department in England were unexampled whereas in India the people witnessed a gradual deterioration even of the imperfect system. They praised Dalhousie for having appointed a commission, but deeply regretted that the newspaper press was not given the opportunity to participate in the benefit of the proposed improvements. The Governor-General was requested to give a favourable consideration to the object of their memorial, and to employ his influence with the authorities at Home to grant them and the readers "the inestimable boon of an anna postage on each cover, without reference to distance."⁵⁷

Dalhousie's reply was sympathetic. He pointed out that it was not competent to the Government of India to decide upon the measures suggested in the report without the Court's sanction, but that he had sent the report with his own "opinions, and recommendations and suggestions", and that their memorial too would be immediately forwarded to the Court.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 41, Memorial on behalf of Proprietors and Editors, 4 February 1852.

⁵⁸ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. x, 10 February 1852.

The Court of Directors, according to it, was neither unaware of the inefficient state of the post office department in India, nor of the complaint for many years. It had, therefore, only to thank Dalhousie for the initiative he had taken in obtaining the requisite materials for a sound judgment on such a complicated question. The Court was happy to see that the range of the Commissioners' inquiries embraced the whole of the post office administration, and their recommendations extended to an entire reform of the existing system.⁵⁹

The Court took nearly a year's time to give its decision. It was led to believe that the high rates on letters led to the suppression of correspondence and to the evasion of postage. However, on 15 December 1852, the Court finally sent its approval. "We have come to the conclusion, after careful consideration, that sufficient grounds are stated for the adoption of the proposed uniform rate of half an anna for a single letter", said the directors.⁶⁰ They left it to the Governor-General to put into effect the various recommendations of the commissioners "for securing the interests of Government, and for rendering the Post Office more available for the great body of the people."

But the Court did not agree with the Governor-General to reduce the charges on newspapers. It also did not agree to appoint a director general for the whole of India. The commissioners and the Governor-General had said that "the Post Office throughout India should constitute one department; the Post Masters-General of the several Presidencies, together with their subordinates,

⁵⁹ *P.P., H.C.*, 1852-53, vol. 76, pap. no. 87, p. 3; Court's Letter to the Government of India, 15 December 1852.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

being relieved from all dependence on the local governments, and placed under the immediate control of an officer to be styled Director General, who should act in immediate subordination to the Government of India." Against this the Court said, "We decidedly object to the introduction of a measure so wholly at variance with the principles and usage which obtain in other departments."⁶¹

The Court's decision on the newspaper postage disappointed the journalists and editors. They began criticising the authorities for not having accepted the views of the Governor-General which seemed to them, so they said, as far too liberal. To some it appeared that the Court had expressed their opinion so absolutely, as to deprive Lord Dalhousie even of the opportunity of a further reference.⁶² But Dalhousie fought on behalf of the newspapers and finally won his point.

On the decision of the Court not to appoint a director general, Dalhousie reacted at once. He said to Sir Charles Wood, "The Court objects to a Director General of Posts who shall not be controlled by Madras and Bombay, on the ground that it is different from other departments. But the Post Office is different from other departments and requires a different machinery. I assure you truly that unless there be one uniform power, at least to introduce the system, it cannot be done. I pray you, therefore, to interfere and to force the Court to let us have what England and America have equally found to be indispensable. At least let us have it for a time."⁶³ On the same day he also said to Russell Ellice

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7; Letter from Court to Government of India, 15 December 1852.

⁶² *F.I.*, 28 April 1853.

⁶³ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 5 May 1853.

of the Court of Directors, "We make also a reference to you regarding the Director General proposed for the new Postal system for which I earnestly beg your favourable consideration. You will see that we do not wish to have anything to do with the Post Office appointments in the Presidencies; but I assure you emphatically that if the Court does not give us exclusive authority for that functionary at least to introduce the system, it will break down the whole plan. In truth I do not see how it is possible to set agoing the new scheme unless by such an officer and with such power."⁶⁴

The long expected Act for the uniform half anna postage was out in draft. The rates were fifty per cent. lower than those in force in England. The privilege of free communication was supposed to have now been placed within the reach of the poorest.⁶⁵ But yet there were many difficulties to overcome before the new system could be put to work. The main difficulty was the manufacture of stamps for letters. Colonel Forbes of the engineers submitted a preliminary report on the practicability of preparing postage stamps in India. It was supposed that if the experiments proved as successful as Colonel Forbes anticipated, then there would remain no doubt of the practicability of furnishing all the stamps required for the country.⁶⁶ It was also expected that the stamps in India would be produced for three pence a thousand instead of five pence as in England. But sufficient time was necessary for the experiments to be successful, and the machinery for the purpose required to be imported from England. Till then the new system

⁶⁴ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Russell Ellice, 5 May 1853.

⁶⁵ *F.I.*, 26 May 1853.

⁶⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 52, Governor-General's Minute, 6 June 1853.

could not be enforced. But Dalhousie was anxious to enforce it without delay, and wanted to import the stamps from England till India was able to produce her own. With this hope he said, "The new system may be set agoing by the end of this year. But unless postage stamps are ready the money payments must be continued under the new system or the introduction of that system must be postponed. If however stamps should be obtained from England through the Honourable Court of Directors from the manufacturers who supply the Queen's Government all difficulty may be avoided." He hoped that if the Court should consider to furnish stamps by arrangement with the authorities, it would be desirable to place the order and commence the supply at once. If the Court would think otherwise and prefer that the stamps be prepared in India, in that case Dalhousie wanted to request the Court to send the machines and the assistants required for the purpose.⁶⁷ On this question he said to Wood, "I have been looking for the reply to the post office reference with anxiety. We are at a stand still until it arrives."⁶⁸

The pressure from the Governor-General had its effect. Though on some points the Court was, according to Charles Wood, "very obstinate"⁶⁹ for some time, yet finally it gave way. It agreed to reconsider the question of the newspaper postage and gave consent to the appointment of a director general. On receipt of this decision, Dalhousie said, "I regret that the low uniform rate (for newspapers) was not conceded at once, as I feel satisfied that the higher one must ultimately be surrendered. . . The Honourable Court has been pleased to

⁶⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 52, Governor-General's Minute, 6 June 1853.

⁶⁸ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 17 Nov. 1853.

⁶⁹ *W.P.*, *L.B.*, vol. iv, p. 96, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 January 1854.

accede to the urgent request of this Government for permission to appoint a Director General.”⁷⁰

Dalhousie selected H. B. Riddell to be the first director general. “I believe that of all those officers who are available for this office Mr. Riddell, the Post Master General in the North Western Provinces, is the best fitted for this important charge of conducting the new system of Postage”, said Dalhousie.⁷¹ He contemplated nominating Riddell since some time past and gave his mind to the late Lieutenant Governor, James Thomason. Dalhousie thought that perhaps on the strength of that expectation, Riddell continued in his office. He asked the new Lieutenant Governor, Colvine, to relieve Riddell as soon as possible to join his new duty.⁷² To Riddell he said in a private letter, “With the assent of my colleagues I wish to propose to you to undertake the duties of this office. The salary you know; the position will be good; the duties important. In your hands I am confident they would be well performed.”⁷³

H. B. Riddell had a good record of service behind him. He was the post master general of Agra for nine years. During that time, the postal revenue increased from Rs. 5,56,000 to Rs. 8,36,000. The number of post offices, which in 1845 was 138, was 247 in 1853. The number of miles of mail road was more than doubled. In 1854 it was 13,884. The number of miles on which the post was carried in carts increased more than fivefold. Passengers were allowed to travel by bhanghy vans, the government bullock trains were organised, district

⁷⁰ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xv, 7 February 1854.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *D.P.*, Letters to Governors & Lt. Governors, Dalhousie to Colvine, 10 February 1854.

⁷³ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to various persons in India, vol. vii, Dalhousie to Riddell, 10 February 1854.

daks were made available to the public, and travellers' bungalows were rendered as comfortable as circumstances permitted. For all these improvements, it was said, Riddell deserved well of the state.⁷⁴

The Court's sanction for the appointment of a director general was like a victory for Dalhousie which he regarded as won after "some struggle". On the questions of concession to the newspapers and of supplying stamps to India, the Court's opinion was yet undecided. Similarly, the talk of a cheap and uniform sea postage between England and India remained a matter of controversy. On this last issue Charles Wood strongly fought on behalf of Dalhousie to move the Court as well as the Chancellor of Exchequer, W. E. Gladstone, for the sanction of a uniform 6d. sea postage between England and India. Earlier in the year he had sent a memorandum to Gladstone telling that "the new contract between Aden and Suez and Bombay renders it necessary to deal with the whole question".⁷⁵ In March, Dalhousie said to Wood, "I leave the Uniform Post Office rate readily in your hands. I think you will see that our reasons for advocating it are strong."⁷⁶ Wood described what he did on the subject and assured Dalhousie that he had not neglected his wishes.⁷⁷ He finally made the Court to agree to the 6d. postage "against their will"⁷⁸ and then said to Dalhousie, "I have on the part of India assented to the uniform sea postage, as you recommended. I am only afraid that the Government, i.e., the Treasury will recede from their offer."⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 14 June 1854.

⁷⁵ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iv, p. 99, Wood to Gladstone, 28 January 1854.

⁷⁶ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 4 March 1854.

⁷⁷ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iv, p. 242, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 March 1854.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Wood to Dalhousie, 24.4.1854.

The question of procuring stamps presented a real difficulty. All attempts were made to produce them in India. Halliday took charge of the undertaking. Captain Thuillier brought his known ability, energy and perseverance to the task. Neither time, nor money, nor thought, nor labour was spared, but yet, as Dalhousie declared, "I regret to say, the attempt to secure a permanent supply of postage stamps in India has wholly failed."⁸⁰ Thuillier had written to him on 28 April, "From the experience gained it is evident that Lithography in this country and during the hot season especially cannot be relied upon; and it is therefore desirable that steps should be taken to procure proper stamps from England, or from steel plates and machinery adapted to the same."⁸¹ Riddell, too, asked the government to take immediate steps to procure stamps from England, or to have water-marked paper and the necessary machinery for multiplying impressions in India, or thirdly to have steel plates prepared in England and sent out to India with paper. But the Court, to put Dalhousie's words, "signified that they had decided not to send out any postage stamps from England." Protesting against a delay of two more years being added to the four years during which the postal question had already been in hand, Lord Dalhousie reminded the Court that without its help and without the early supply of stamps "the whole of this great public improvement must fall to the ground."⁸²

It is evident that the Governor-General was not prepared to postpone the matter any longer. He passed order to the director general, "Pending the supply from England of home-made stamps I hope Thuillier and you

⁸⁰ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xviii, 5 May 1854.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

will be able to set a-going the new system on blues or blacks however imperfect they may be.”⁸³

On the question of newspaper postage, the director general addressed to the government “a letter of great importance” and showed that the post office commissioners erred in the calculation on which they founded their conclusion, that newspapers could not be conveyed at a low uniform rate without heavy loss to the revenue. Dalhousie took this opportunity to advocate his opinion once again. “I much distrust my own fitness to form an opinion on a question of this nature”, said the Governor-General, “but the arguments now advanced certainly appear to me to establish that the calculations of the Commissioners regarding newspapers was based upon a fallacy, and I place great trust in the authority with which Mr. Riddell’s long experience enables him to speak on this subject.

“Having advocated from the first the uniform low rate of newspaper postage even at the risk of considerable loss of revenue, I need hardly add that now that it has been shown that no such loss will be incurred, I wish to express a very earnest hope that the Honourable Court will be pleased to give its sanction, and thus make a great measure complete.”⁸⁴

In a minute dated 25 May 1854 Lord Dalhousie decided that the post office throughout India under the new system was to be placed on a footing precisely similar to that of the electric telegraph. Unity of authority was thought to be indispensable in both the departments. The director general was authorised to exercise

⁸³ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to Various Persons in India, vol. vii, Dalhousie to Riddell, 5 May 1854.

⁸⁴ *D.P.*, Governor-General’s Minutes, vol. xviii, 13 May 1854.

exclusive authority in all matters relating to the service of the post office, over all officers belonging to that department, in every part of India.

It was also decided that the post-masters-general would be appointed by the local governments, and the subordinate officers of the department would be nominated in the same manner as before; but after they were appointed they would be under the exclusive control of the director general.⁸⁵

The Governor-General continued demanding the Court's sanction for the cheap sea postage, for the reduction of rates on newspaper postage and for the supply of stamps from England. These demands were conceded during the second half of 1854. In June, Dalhousie said to Wood, "The assent you have given to the sea postage is good news. It will be very dirty of the Royal Post Office if it now backs out. I beg your attention to another despatch about newspaper postage; in which it appears that the low uniform rate may be given on them without the loss once anticipated. The concession must come, and I strongly advise that it be made early and with a good grace, especially now that it may be made as I believe, without loss."⁸⁶

In July, Charles Wood sent the welcome news, "We will send you stamps for your letters as soon as we can. I put the matter in hand on the receipt of your private letter."⁸⁷ This relieved Dalhousie, in his own words, "of a considerable anxiety", and he felt obliged to Wood for his help.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xviii, 25 May 1854.

⁸⁶ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 13 June 1854.

⁸⁷ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Wood to Dalhousie, 10 July 1854.

⁸⁸ *W.P.*, *I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 31 August 1854.

The main obstacle on the way of putting the reform into operation was removed, and thus in the words of Dalhousie in his diary, "On the 1st October, after infinite trouble and delay the new Postal system—the uniform rate of postage, was brought into operation throughout India."⁸⁹ It was a proud moment for him and he reported it to Queen Victoria in the following words, "Foremost among the measures of internal improvement which the year has produced is the Reform of the Postal System. The change has long been in preparation; but it was not until three days ago that the principle of cheap and uniform postage which has been so successfully tried in England, was introduced into the Indian Empire. The measure has been applied to all India; and although it must involve some present loss of revenue to the Government, it will be productive of many immediate advantages to the people, and will ultimately reproduce the revenue lost."⁹⁰

Shortly after, the Court acceded to the demand for a low uniform newspaper postage, and Dalhousie noted again in his diary, "On the 1st November it (postal reform) will be rendered complete by the introduction of the uniform rate of one anna for newspapers—a concession which I have only now, after frequent reference, been able to extract from the Court of Directors."⁹¹

The editors and journalists in India became happy. It was commented, "After nearly four years of agitation, after the appointment of a Commission, a report, three despatches, and two severe defeats, the Indian Press and Lord Dalhousie have carried their point at last." In the matter of price there was nothing more to be desired.

⁸⁹ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1854.

⁹⁰ *D.P.*, no. 397, Letter to Queen Victoria, 4 October 1854.

⁹¹ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1854.

The rate was lower than the English penny stamp, and only higher than the American.⁹² Dalhousie had also the satisfaction to see that in England orders were placed for sets of stamps for India to be supplied regularly.⁹³

Within a few months of its working, the system showed the signs of prospect. Under the influence of cheap and uniform postage, people began to discontinue the practice of sending unpaid letters most rapidly. It was gratifying to find that even in the first three months of operation, the increase in the number of letters in Calcutta was nearly 50 per cent.⁹⁴ "Somebody sent me a good looking return", congratulated Sir Charles Wood to Dalhousie before the end of the year, "of the increase in the number of letters posted and received after your reduction of postage."⁹⁵

Dalhousie desired that everywhere in India the system would work well and be speedy. Negligence of duty on the part of any public servant was not a thing to be overlooked by him. How bitter he felt against the post master general of Madras for some kind of negligence is known from a private letter he sent to the Governor. He wrote from Ootacamund, "I dare say you will think me a Tartar; but I have been shaking also your Post Master General and your Telegraph man. I have been accustomed to a style of carrying on the public business very differently from their's—and I can't submit to the slow coach proceedings from which they have made me suffer."⁹⁶

Towards the close of Dalhousie's administration,

⁹² *F.I.*, 26 October 1854.

⁹³ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1854.

⁹⁴ *F.I.*, 8 March 1855.

⁹⁵ *W.P.*, *L.B.*, vol. vi, p. 249, Wood to Dalhousie, 9 December 1854.

⁹⁶ *D.P.*, Letters to Governors & Lt. Governors, Dalhousie to Harris, 26 March 1855.

more than three thousand miles of telegraph lines had been constructed and were in operation. The reformed postal system brought the entire country nearer to these lines. In an electric telegraph notice, issued from the central office at Meerut dated 25 June 1855, William O'Shaughnessy drew public attention to the orders of the government by which messages were to be received for transmission at any telegraph office, if sent by post from places not having telegraph stations, and written on ordinary stamped paper of the value required.⁹⁷ The new post and the electric telegraph applied together worked like a miracle in developing communication from one end of India to another.

Before Dalhousie had left India he had the satisfaction to see that while a single letter was conveyed from one part to the other of the British Isles for 1d., in India, a single letter was "conveyed over distances immeasurably greater—from Peshawur on the borders of Afghanistan, to the southernmost village of Cape Comorin, or from of the Indus—for no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ d. "The postage chargeable on the same letter three years ago in India would not have been less than 1 shilling or 16 times the new charge."⁹⁸ He said in his last minute, "As yet, it is too soon to form any correct estimate of the actual effect of these changes upon the amount of general correspondence, and upon the public revenue. So far as we may venture to form a conjecture, the increase, in correspondence has already been at the rate of 25 per cent. while the loss of revenue has been less considerable than was expected."⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *F.I.*, 6 September 1855.

⁹⁸ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 18, Dalhousie's Final Minute, 28 February 1856.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

The real magnitude of these changes and of their social effects was really difficult to be estimated then, but Dalhousie had the imagination to realise that he had effected "a departmental revolution so complete, having consequences so wide-spread and so generally beneficial" as had rarely been done.

It may be said that of all the economic measures of Dalhousie, the half-anna postal system proved itself to be of an immediate consequence to the people at large. Railways and telegraph touched the society only at its surface, at least for many years after their introduction. But it was not so with the postal system. The post office penetrated into innumerable villages of India which hardly felt the impact of the other two innovations. While its popularity was above question from the beginning, it had a manifold role to play. In urban areas and with the upper section of the society, post office became, besides its other values, a great economic force. Facility of communication greatly encouraged trade and commerce. With rural population, it had a tremendous social value. The poorest man could spare half an anna to communicate with a distant relation. To the illiterate the post office carried the rudimentary ideas about the value of education. He had either to make others write or read a letter for him, or try for himself to do it; in either case, he felt the necessity and value of literacy for him or his children.

The post office also played an important role in breaking down the static nature of the Indian society. Journey to various places inside the country, and frequent interchange of ideas between places of immense distances, became possible with the coming of the new post. Judged from whatever angle, social, cultural, educative or economic, the half-anna postal system of

Lord Dalhousie played a remarkable role in the progress of India.

On its financial aspect, during the last year of Dalhousie's administration, although the gross revenue amounted to £201,462, there was a loss on the operations of the department of no less than £44,254. But the number of post offices multiplied so rapidly and with it the amount of correspondence, that within five years, post office yielded a surplus which continued almost for every decade with rare exceptions. This was more than what could have been expected by Dalhousie and his officers while beginning with the experiment.

CHAPTER VI

The Circumstances Leading to the Introduction of Vernacular Education into India.

PART I

The controversy, during the time of Bentinck, Macaulay and Rammohun Roy, over the relative advantage of teaching English on the one side and the learned Eastern languages (Sanskrit and Arabic) on the other, practically came to an end with the famous government resolution of 7 March 1835 which declared that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."¹ This decision, however, did not solve the real problem of education for the great mass of the Indian people, to whom both the English and the Sanskrit or Arabic languages were 'foreign' alike. Macaulay's contemporaries were not insensible about the importance of encouraging the cultivation of the vernacular languages. During the time of the above controversy and after, the claims of the vernacular languages were broadly and prominently admitted by all parties. It was said that "If English had been rejected, and the learned Eastern tongues adopted, the people must equally

¹ *S.E.R.*, Part I, 1781-1839, p. 130, Bentinck's Resolution of 7 March 1835.

have received their knowledge through the vernacular dialects.”²

The English education began to do good to the country. As was expected by Raja Rammohun, it began to diffuse important knowledge among the higher classes of the Indian society. It broke up “the stationary position of the Hindu mind, and imparted to it the impulse of progress”. It began to place the educated people ahead of the popular superstition, and “introduced them to a new world of thoughts, and associations, and aspirations”. But within some years after Bentinck and Rammohun’s time, it was realised that the English education was, in itself, “unequal to the mighty task of regenerating and elevating the Nation.”³ Only a tiny section of the Indian population became capable of appreciating European science and literature. On the other hand, there was a growing desire among the people, especially in Bengal and Bombay, to educate their children in their indigenous vernacular languages. Private vernacular schools were established at many places in spite of the complete indifference of the government. William Adam, who was deputed to examine the state of education in Bengal, was convinced of the popular desire for vernacular, and submitted a plan for the improvement of the indigenous schools and teachers before the Governor-General Lord Auckland. Adam tried to enforce his views “for the instruction of the poor and ignorant, those who are too ignorant to understand the evils of ignorance and too poor, even if they did, to be able to remove them.” But Lord Auckland in his minute of 1839 felt that “the period has not yet arrived

² *S.E.R.*, Part II, 1840-1859, pp. 71-72, Extract from Report of General Committee of Public Instruction, 1835.

³ *F.I.*, 16 March 1848.

when the Government can join in these attempts with reasonable hope of practical good.”⁴ He decided against the adoption of Adam’s scheme largely on the ground that there were no suitable text books in the vernacular which could be used in the proposed schools.⁵

To some English educationalists in India, however, the neglect of vernacular for long appeared undesirable. In 1840, Captain Candy, the superintendent of the Poona Sanskrit College, submitted a report in which he declared,

“It seems to me that too much encouragement cannot be given to the study of English, nor too much value put upon it, in its proper place and connection, in a plan for the intellectual and moral improvement of India. The medium through which the mass of the population must be instructed I humbly conceive must be their vernacular Tongues, and neither English nor Sanskrit.”⁶

The government on the other hand, it was said, exerted all weight and influence in favour of English. Lord Auckland declared,

“I would then make it my principal aim to communicate through the means of the English language, a complete education in European Literature, Philosophy and Science to the greater number of students who may be found ready to accept it at our hands, and for whose instructions our funds will admit of our providing.”⁷

Colleges and schools for English instruction were established in the principal cities and towns, and the old

⁴ *S.E.R.*, Part I, p. 152, Minute by Lord Auckland, 1839.

⁵ *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 65

⁶ *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 2, Extract from Report of Capt. Candy, 1840.

⁷ *S.E.R.*, Part I, p. 157, Minute by Lord Auckland, 1839.

Mohomedan and Hindu institutions, though upheld as seminaries of Oriental learning, had English classes attached to them.⁸ The Court of Directors in a despatch dated 20 January 1841 reaffirmed its support to Bentinck's resolution of 1835, and further said, "We wish a fair trial to be given to the experiment of engrafting European knowledge on the studies of the existing learned classes, encouraged as it will be by giving to the seminaries in which those studies are prosecuted, the aid of able and efficient European Superintendence."⁹ To encourage the English education further, the Government of India passed a resolution on 10 October 1844, promising preference of selection for public employment to students of distinguished ability.¹⁰ In November 1844 Lord Hardinge informed Queen Victoria,

"In order to reward native talent and render it practically useful to the state, Sir Henry Hardinge, after due deliberation, has issued a Resolution, by which the most meritorious students will be appointed to fill the public offices which fall vacant throughout Bengal.

"This encouragement has been received by the Hindoo population with the greatest gratitude....

"It is impossible throughout Your Majesty's immense Empire to employ the number of highly paid European civil servants, which the Public Service requires. This deficiency is the great evil of British administration. By dispensing annually a proportion of well educated natives, throughout the provinces, under British superintendence, well founded hopes are entertained, that prejudices may

⁸ *D.P.*, no. 141, Statistical Papers, East India House.

⁹ *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 4, Court's Despatch on Native Education, 20 January 1841.

¹⁰ *D.P.*, no. 141, Statistical Papers, East India House.

gradually disappear, the public service be improved and attachment to British institutions increased.”¹¹

Such measures, especially the temptation of service as a reward of education, seemed to some as having made education popular. Sir Henry Seton, who was the puisne judge of the Supreme Court, Calcutta, and vice-president of the Asiatic Society, Bengal, drawing the attention of Sir John Hobhouse to this point in 1846, said, “The demand for education continues to increase, partly, no doubt, in consequence of the judicious measure of holding out public service as its reward. One of the first calls upon your attention will be the Calcutta University, which will, I have no doubt, receive your sanction and support.”¹²

But, in fact, the English education could not reach many. Even in Bengal, where “extraordinary efforts” were made to promote it, during several years of experiment, as was seen, it was hardly able “to produce one or two thousand men, at the farthest, capable of appreciating European science and literature.”¹³ A report produced by the East India House before the House of Commons in November 1847, showing a return of the number of scholars in the several schools and other establishments for education, maintained at the public expense, in the several presidencies of British India, revealed a very poor state of affairs. In all the colleges and schools of the North Western Provinces (Benares, Agra and Delhi colleges, Ghazeepur, Allahabad, Saugor, Jabbalpur and Bareilly schools) there were only a total number of 2,186 students on roll on 30 April 1845; in all

¹¹ *Add. Mss.* 40, 474, fos. 176-84, Hardinge to Victoria, 23 Nov. 1844.

¹² *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 853, f. 156, Henry Seton to President, 6 September 1846.

¹³ *F.I.*, 16 March 1848.

the thirty-six institutions of Bengal, Assam and Orissa, including the Calcutta Sanskrit College, Calcutta Hindu College, the Madrisa and the Medical College, there were only 7,036 scholars on roll on the same date; in a large number of schools in Bombay presidency there were a total of 8,138 pupils on roll on 30 April 1844; and in the presidency of Madras, it was ascertained upon inquiry that there were no such educational establishments in existence with the exception of the Madras High School where the number of pupils was only 156 in April 1847.¹⁴ It may be mentioned again that among the above scholars all were not reading English. The list of institutions for Bengal contained several elementary schools where only the vernacular was taught and the list for Bombay contained a large number of government district vernacular schools. This fact greatly reduced the number of scholars taking education in English. The statistical results of the English education at the time of the education despatch showed the aggregate number of scholars all over India as 8,657 in eleven English Colleges and forty English schools.¹⁵ Of course, at the time of the despatch there were as many as ninety-two English schools run by the missionaries with over thirteen thousand pupils.¹⁶

While the English education made so slow a progress, the number of vernacular schools increased greatly in the country in spite of official indifference. All inquiry from the time of William Adam in 1835 showed that although the indigenous vernacular schools were of a primitive kind, yet they supplied a course of instruction

¹⁴ *P.P., H.C.*, 1847-48, vol. 48, pap. no. 20, pp. 1-5, Return to an Order of House of Commons, 25 November 1847.

¹⁵ *W.P., I.B.P.*, Various Stages of Education Draft, (1st stage).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

which was decidedly useful, or at any rate which ryots and small proprietors, shop-keepers and the servants and agents of zamindars considered to be useful. It was admitted that the indigenous schools had rarely any printed books, that they were often held in a cowshed or an out-house, or an old temple, or even under a tree, that the village *guru* (teacher) was inadequately paid by scanty fees, food and clothing, or annual or weekly presents, and that, in short, the whole thing was very crude of its kind, still those schools did supply a sort of information which ryots and villagers who thought at all of learning to read and write, could not do without.¹⁷

At times, some local governments tried to show half-hearted sympathy to the cause of vernacular education. For example, towards the end of 1844 the Government of Bengal wrote to the Suddar Board of Revenue,

“The Right Honourable the Governor of Bengal has determined to sanction the formation of village schools in the several districts of Bengal, Behar and Cuttack, in which sound and useful elementary instructions may be imparted in the vernacular language. The funds available for this purpose are limited and the number of schools which at present it is practicable to establish in each district is necessarily small; but this circumstance is of no immediate consequence, as under any circumstances it would not have been prudent to commence upon a measure of this nature, which as yet can only be considered experimental, on a more extended plan.”¹⁸

Local measures of such nature resulted almost in nothing. And for a considerable time neither did the

¹⁷ *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 13, Note of W. Seton Kerr, 21 July 1853.

¹⁸ *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 82, Under Secretary to Government of Bengal to Secretary to Suddar Board of Revenue, 18 December 1844.

supreme government of India nor did the Home authorities give a serious thought to take over and spread vernacular education as a government concern.

Lord Dalhousie in his first address in India was said to have assured the people "of the deep interest he felt in the progress and improvement of education . . . , and of his determination to promote it to the utmost of his power." He gave it to understand that "it would be the object of his administration to afford every encouragement for the development of native talent."¹⁹ But there is no evidence to show that the Governor-General thought anything of the education of the people soon on his arrival. His above address was delivered to the alumni of the various government institutions in Calcutta, and it seems, his promise to promote education was aimed at higher education and not elementary.

But before long his attention was drawn almost simultaneously to two developments concerning the vernacular education, one was a promising experiment by James Thomason at Agra, and the other was an acute controversy over the relative merits and demerits of the subject at Bombay. Both these factors had their direct bearing upon the general policy of the government towards education, and to an extent prepared ground for the introduction of the vernacular education on a wider scale.

James Thomason played an important role during his Indian career. He came to India when he was eighteen and could come very near to the people by acquiring considerable proficiency in Indian languages. On 12 December 1843 Thomason assumed the office of the Lieutenant Governor of the North Western

¹⁹ *F.I.*, 2 March 1848.

Provinces* and held that office until his death on 27 September 1853. During these ten years, he associated his name with some great works in the province. He strenuously advocated the construction of the great Ganges Canal (the greatest canal of the world at that time) against which the then Governor-General Lord Ellenborough seriously protested. But Thomason succeeded in having it done, though the canal was opened after his death. He developed communications, improved police and jails, and reformed every branch of the public services. In the course of an official visit to Bareilly, death occurred to him when he was not even fifty. Lord Dalhousie with his Council deeply grieved at his death and said, "The Lieutenant Governor has long since earned for himself a name which ranks him high among the most distinguished servants of the Hon'ble East India Company. Conspicuous ability, devotion to the public service and a conscientious discharge of every duty have marked each step of his honourable course while his surpassing administrative capacity, his extended knowledge of affairs, his clear judgment, his benevolence of character, and suavity of demeanour have adorned and exalted the high position which he was wisely selected to fill."²⁰

Thomason's greatest service to India was his experiment with vernacular education. His scheme was somewhat unique which aimed at the most elementary education for the mass. According to him, the people of Hindusthan were essentially an agricultural people and anything which concerned their land immediately riveted their attention and excited their interest.²¹

* The old name of the present-day Uttar Pradesh.

²⁰ *Calcutta Gazette*, 3 October 1853.

²¹ *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 236. Letter from Govt. of N.W.P., June 1845.

This led him to aim at educating the people by some sort of pressure on them exercised through the land system. During the previous land settlement in the North Western Provinces, a measurement was made and a map drawn of every field, and a record kept of every right attaching to the field. The patwaries' papers, based on the settlement, constituted an annual registry of these rights, and were regularly filed in the collector's office. For the peasant, it was important for the protection of his own land, to be acquainted with the principles on which the papers were compiled so as to satisfy himself that the entries affecting himself were correct. This necessity seemed to Thomason to supply "a direct and powerful inducement to the mind of almost every individual to acquire so much of reading, writing, arithmetic and mensuration, as may suffice for the protection of his rights."²² He decided to bring home to the people the necessity of such an elementary education in their own indigenous schools, and prepared a scheme to encourage and improve the said institutions.

To carry the matter further, Thomason laid his proposal for the formation of village schools before the Government of India and his proposal was forwarded for the consideration of the Court.* The Court recognised the necessity for giving some powerful impulse to elementary education in the North Western Provinces and showed its desire "to sanction the adoption of some more comprehensive plan of extending and improving the means of popular instruction throughout the country". But it entertained some doubts on the

²² *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 236. Letter from Govt. of N.W.P., June 1845.

* The proposal for foundation of village schools was submitted in a letter dated 18 November 1846 to which the Court's reply came in a despatch dated 25 August 1847.

plans suggested by Thomason. The directors considered some features of the plan as "open to obvious objections" and, according to them, they were "not satisfied of its expediency".²³ Thomason, however, was not discouraged by the Court's reply and to remove doubts from their mind, he set himself with earnestness to devise a plan which he finally placed for sanction before Lord Dalhousie in April 1848.

While James Thomason was beginning to draw the attention of the authorities both at Calcutta and London, the question gave rise to a great dispute at Bombay among different members of the Board of Education which brought the issue to its real prominence. Though the Bombay controversy was not as significant as the controversy of the time of Macaulay, yet it carried much meaning and resulted in influencing the trend of British educational policy.

In a minute dated 24 February 1847, Colonel Jervis, member of the Bombay Board of Education, declared the following:

"In our endeavours to make the knowledge of English among the natives so prominent and essential a qualification, we are neglecting the benefit of three hundred years' experience in Europe, and we are retrograding to the days, in which the Latin was the sole language of literature; and when, in consequence, knowledge, both spiritual and temporal, was confined to a few monks, a few Divines—a few Men of Letters. Until such an exclusive agency was put an end to,—until the modern tongues of Europe were emancipated,—the people could never learn, or know for themselves. Should we then,

²³ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 13, *Vide* Letter from J. Thornton, Secretary to Government of N.W.P., 19 April 1848.

here, at this day, so far forget this lesson, and insist so much on imposing the burden of the foreign language of a handful of rulers on millions of our native population?"²⁴

He wanted that in the first instance, the course of instruction should be conveyed through the medium of the English language; but eventually, classes should be formed for instructing through the medium of the principal vernaculars of the presidency of Bombay. His suggestion was that the interdiction of government in the following words might be taken off, "Government see no reason why the instruction should not be conveyed exclusively in English."*

The president of the Board, Sir Erskine Perry, attacked this view. He thought that English had already been accepted as the medium of instruction in the government schools and to raise the question of vernacular, therefore, was "somewhat irksome". He denounced the proposal of Colonel Jervis as "impolitic and impracticable". But the question was then already under discussion in and outside the Board, and it seemed apparent that the matter should go for the consideration of the government. To justify his views, therefore, Sir Erskine recorded, "I think Col. Jervis's proposal should be rejected, and if he desires that his views should be submitted to Government, we ought not to omit stating

²⁴ *S.E.R.*, Part II, pp. 12-14, Minute by Col. Jervis, 24 February 1847.

* The learned Orientalist, Horace Wilson, had observed earlier, "It is not by the English language that we can enlighten the people of India. It can be effected only through the forms of speech which they already understand and use.

"The project of imparting English literature along with English cottons into India, and bringing it into universal use, must at once be felt by every reasonable mind as chimerical and ridiculous. If the people are to have a literature, it must be their own. The stuff may be, in a great degree, European, but it must be freely interwoven with home spun materials, and the fashion must be Asiatic."

the fact, that the prospects of education were never so flourishing at this Presidency as they are now, under the present system, and at the present moment."²⁵

The views of the president were challenged by the Indian members of the Board, Jagannath Sankarsett, Framjee Cowasjee, and Muhammad Ibrahim Muckba. Jagannath Sankarsett said, "I am persuaded that the vernacular languages possess advantages superior to English, as the medium of communicating useful knowledge to the people of Western India. It is my humble opinion an impossibility to teach the great mass of the people a language, such as English, so widely different from their own."²⁶ The other two members agreed with the above opinion. They all pointed out that only an insignificant portion of the whole population was acquainted with the English, or had any prospect or means of becoming so. Moreover, it was strongly felt that with English as the medium of instruction it was impossible to extend the advantages of education to the female population of India. Such arguments in favour of vernacular education led Colonel Jervis to advocate his theory more boldly.

Ultimately the matter was referred to the Government of Bombay. It may be mentioned here that from the time of Mountstuart Elphinstone's Governorship, the policy of the Bombay Government had been liberalised towards vernacular education. Elphinstone had said, "...the dangers to which we are exposed from the sensitive character of the religion of the Natives, and the slippery foundation of our Government, owing to the total separation between us and our objects, require

²⁵ *S.E.R.*, Part II, pp. 14-16, Minute by E. Perry, 14 April 1847.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, Minute by J. Sankarsett, 1 May 1847.

the adoption of some measures to counteract them, and the only one is to remove their prejudices, and to communicate our own principles and opinions by the diffusion of a rational education.”

Though Elphinstone’s sentiments were in favour of the English education and he desired to invent the best means of creating a demand for it, yet he hoped to diffuse knowledge among the people through the vernacular medium by the founding or assisting schools and by the preparation of class books and a system of improved superintendence.²⁷ His views prevailed upon the future decisions of the Bombay Government.

In any way, the Bombay Government took some time to go into the dispute and gave its opinion on 5 April 1848. It wrote to the Board of Education,

“...the Hon’ble the Governor-in-Council is of opinion that any one, who observes and compares the proficiency attained by the pupils in the English and Vernacular schools, cannot fail to be convinced of the superiority which the latter manifest in sound and accurate understanding of the subject of their studies. He (the governor) has no hesitation in declaring his acquiescence in the view of those who give the preference to the Native language, in so far that he considers the main efforts for the general education of the people should be exerted in the language familiar to them from infancy; at the same time he would unquestionably afford them the means of acquiring the higher branches of education in the English language.

“Hitherto, the greatest attention appears to have been devoted to the study of English, the Governor-in-Council feels convinced that the process must

¹ S.E.R., Part I, p. 176.

be reversed, and that the Vernacular must become the medium for the diffusion of sound knowledge among the masses."²⁸

The above decision of the Bombay Government led Erskine Perry to threat resignation from the Board of Education. At this stage of the dispute the matter came before Lord Dalhousie. To Dalhousie, in his own words, it was "worse than a heresy" that "any authority should argue now for Arabic, Sanskrit, or Persian as the fit foundation for Government education."²⁹ But about the vernacular languages, he admitted that "Whether the Education of India should be based exclusively on English, rejecting the Vernacular, or not, is a question which may admit of controversy."³⁰ The Governor-General on his behalf did not make any comment on the Bombay affairs.

But in the meantime, Thomason put his scheme before the Governor-General for his approval. His scheme contemplated the establishment of one government school, and that as it were a model school, in each tahasildari, and provided a powerful agency for visiting all the indigenous schools for furnishing the people and the teachers with advice, assistance and encouragement, and for rewarding those school masters who might be found the most deserving. For the time, he did not want to introduce his plan in the whole of his province but wanted to confine his experiment to eight districts only. For the purpose of the experiment Thomason requested the Governor-General for his permission, and

²⁸ *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 19, Letter from Government of Bombay, 5 April 1848.

²⁹ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to Various Persons in India and Europe, Dalhousie to Erskine, 18 May 1848.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

an annual sanction of Rs. 36,000 only.³¹ The Indian Government was told that though the scheme was not sufficiently matured for its general introduction, yet it was full of promise. It was felt evident that the success of the project depended on the efficiency with which it was superintended. According to Thomason, "There must be some officer who will visit the interior of the several districts, will be himself in constant communication with all the zillah and pergunah visitors, and will combine the operations in the different zillahs, and see that the whole are carried on consistently and vigorously."³²

Even though at this stage Dalhousie's personal attitude towards the spread of vernacular education was far from being clear or definite, yet he recommended to the Court in favour of Thomason's scheme, and wanted to put it into trial "as an experiment."³³ The difficulty which the Government of India faced about Thomason's scheme was in regard to the employment of an efficient agency for superintending the village schools. The Governor-General-in-Council was not competent under the orders of the Hon'ble Court to create a new civil appointment even temporarily, without their previous sanction, and he was therefore compelled to withhold his consent to the arrangement proposed for appointing a visitor general until the receipt of the reply of the Court.

Besides Thomason, there were a few others, too, who more or less felt in favour of introducing vernacular education. In Bengal, the deputy governor, Sir

³¹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 13, Letter from J. Thornton, Secretary to Govt. of N.W.P., 19 April 1848.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, Letter from Secretary to Govt. of India, 2 September 1848.

Herbert Maddock, declared, "of the millions of subjects of the British Crown in India, the great mass know not our language, nor is there any probability that they ever will know it. But this is no reason why they should not be taught through the medium of their own language."³⁴ In Bombay, the Governor Lord Falkland was sorry to see that the conflicting views among the members of the Board of Education had divided the Board into parties and that the power of the Board for all good purposes was paralysed. In such circumstances he felt the necessity of defining the government policy clearly.

Falkland desired to maintain the principle that "education of a superior quality can only be imparted through the medium of English". He equally believed that "if ever the deplorable ignorance and error prevailing throughout the country is to give place to the high order of education and enlightenment, which now distinguished the European race, the triumph will be due to minds imbued with the science and literature of England, acquired through the English language." But true to the tradition of Mountstuart Elphinstone he felt it unjust that the money at the disposal of the government should be exclusively or disproportionately devoted to English education alone. Realising that people needed elementary and general instruction, Falkland said, "Government are clearly of opinion that this general instruction ought not to be communicated to the masses through the medium of English, but in the language in which people speak and think."³⁵

He laid four points to be adopted, (a) provision for superior education through the medium of English strictly limited however to the education of the wealthy

³⁴ *F.I.*, 1 March 1849.

³⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 36, Minute by Lord Falkland, 9 September 1849.

who can afford to pay for it, the highly intelligent among the native youth who can establish their claims to admission into the English schools by a standard of acquirements, and the class of youngmen who are trained up as masters of the vernacular schools; (b) the production through the same medium of a superior class of district school masters and the providing for them an adequate scale of salaries; (c) the education of the people under these masters in vernacular schools; (d) the systematic encouragement of translations into the vernacular from works of science and general literature.³⁶

Simultaneous with the above decision of the Governor, the Hon'ble J. P. Willoughby of the Bombay Government issued a long report of sixty pages of small print in favour of the vernacular education. He recalled that with the views of himself and Colonel Jervis were associated "the honoured names of Elphinstone, Munro, Malcolm, Edmonstone, Macnaghten, Prinsep, Thomason, Clerk, Pottinger, Horace Wilson, James Mill, Hodgson, Launcelot Wilkinson, Maddock, Parish, Reid, and numerous other persons of minor celebrity."³⁷ Willoughby produced elaborate arguments in favour of vernacular.

With this the Bombay dispute came to an end. But Willoughby's views were strongly challenged by John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune, the President of the Bengal Council of Education and the Law Member of the Governor-General's Council. Bethune was a rare friend of India. His endeavours to educate the daughters of the Hindus will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

³⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 36, Minute by Lord Falkland, 9 September 1849.

³⁷ *S.E.R.*, Part II, pp. 25-26, Minute by J. P. Willoughby, 12 January 1850.

But on the question of general education, he, like his more illustrious predecessor Macaulay, advocated in favour of English language. Bethune believed that the purpose of education should be to produce marked improvement in the customs and ways of thinking of the inhabitants of India. To him, the "great curse of caste, infant marriage, polygamy, and the enforced celibacy of widows, with all the crimes and abominations that follow in their train, are mainly supported by superstitions which melt away like snow before fire when brought into direct contact with European knowledge." He said,

"I see the reasonable grounds that there are for hoping that, by the hold which English ideas are gradually gaining on our most advanced students, we may, in the course of another generation at farthest have the powerful support of a numerous native party in urging us on to attack and alleviate some of the most prominent social evils of the country."³⁸

Bethune, therefore, declared the doctrine of Willoughby and the Bombay Government as alarming because they had advocated that the object should be to impart a moderate degree of useful knowledge to the mass of people throughout the presidency, rather than that efforts should be exclusively directed to train up a few first rate scholars in the schools at Bombay. He, on the other hand, believed that if the Indian languages should be cultivated, that should be done by the scholars who received their education in the English schools and colleges. He was satisfied with the working of the Bengal schools and colleges and said, "It would be unreasonable to desire greater progress than is now being

³⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 36, Minute by J. E. D. Bethune, 23 January 1851.

silently effected by the system adopted on this side of India, through our four colleges at Calcutta, Hooghly, Kishnaghur and Dacca, with their affiliated schools." He hoped and believed that a similar system be introduced in Bombay presidency by the establishment of central English schools, aiming at a high standard of proficiency, not only in Bombay, but also in some of the other principal towns of that presidency such as, Poona, Surat, Ahmedabad and others.³⁹ The other members of the Governor-General's Council also took part in the above controversy.*

About this time Lord Dalhousie was busy in consolidating the British administration in the newly conquered territory of the Punjab. He had developed a soft corner for the people of that area, appreciated their valour and goodness, and set himself to work for their welfare. In this connection, he had to think about the education in the Punjab. He selected Amritsar, "as the shrine of the Sikh religion and deeply revered by the Hindoos, the chief seat of the manufactures of the Punjab, the leading mart of its trade and the great repository of its learning", to be the most favourable site for the establishment of the first experimental school within the Punjab and authorised its immediate formation.⁴⁰ This proposed school was for the English education. But the Governor-General kept in view, to put his own words, "the future possibility of a general system of education throughout the province". He asked the Punjab Board of Administration to "call on the commissioners of the several divisions to furnish during the course of the coming year report on the state of

³⁹ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 36, Minute by J. E. D. Bethune, 23 January 1851.

* See Appendix C.

⁴⁰ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. v, 26 December 1850.

Education within their respective bounds, specifying the number of schools, the number of scholars, the mode of remuneration, and all other matters of detail which would be useful or interesting to the Government.”⁴¹

But as yet Dalhousie had not given his serious attention to the question of vernacular education, and his indecision was proved when he refused to give his opinion over Bombay controversy. It was Bethune who wanted the Governor-General to see all the relative papers on the question before they were sent Home. Bethune’s observations on the question of education at Bombay were ‘misunderstood’ by some and this led the Law Member to issue another minute on the subject with a slightly different tone. He said,

“It is well known to those who have paid any attention to the principles I have advocated as President of the Council of Education of Bengal, that I have on all occasions inculcated the importance of combining cultivation of vernacular literature with the attainment of a high standard of proficiency in English knowledge, meaning by that expression a great deal more than knowledge of English. But that is not the main question to which I desired to draw the attention of the Government of India and of the Home authorities.

“Mr. Willoughby has broadly asserted that the main use of our schools is to train a better class of inferior officers for the service of Government....

“This is the doctrine against which I protest, as being wholly at variance with the opinions of the most enlightened friends of native education in India, and with the clear and often repeated injunctions of the Home Government.”⁴²

¹ *D.P.*, Governor-General’s Minutes, vol. v, 26 December 1850.

² *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 36, Minute by J. E. D. Bethune, 10 June 1851.

Bethune, in an intelligent way, added one more point against the introduction of a general scheme of vernacular education by saying, "With the very limited funds allotted to Education in India we cannot hope to produce any great direct effect upon the masses of population; our main efforts ought to be concentrated on teaching those who will teach and lead their countrymen in the way of sound thinking, and of moral and social improvement."⁴³

When the papers "on the much disputed question of the relative merits of the English and the Vernacular languages as the media of communicating instruction to the natives of this country" were put before Lord Dalhousie at Simla in July 1851, he did not dissent from the general views recorded by Bethune, but did not think it necessary, as he said, "to enter on this very large question when no practical result is contemplated". He let it to be known to the interested parties that the matter would be dealt with by the Court, "and that the Government of India would not be warranted in interposing their orders at this time."⁴⁴

With the silence of the Governor-General, nearly two years passed without any final decision. The Court of Directors, too, did not pass any comment on the Bombay papers.

But during this period James Thomason proved his experiment a great success. Opinion at many places was also seen to be fast moving in favour of vernacular education. The British administrative system was in a continuous process of expansion. A previous policy

⁴³ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 36, Minute by J. E. D. Bethune, 10 June 1851.

⁴⁴ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 36, Letter from Secretary with Governor-General, 21 July 1851.

which threw open services to English educated Indians did not prove itself a very perfect system. In various fields of administration, innumerable officers of the government, without a sound knowledge in vernacular languages, could not come nearer to people. The necessity of vernacular education was not only felt for the improvement of the people but also for the improvement of the administration. It was seen that men, who rose to the highest grades in the service, bitterly lamented that they had not in their younger days devoted a portion of their time to thorough acquisition of the vernaculars. There were many instances of brilliant careers in the civil service of the government with but a very imperfect knowledge of the language of the country, but it was unquestionable that even those men "would have had it in their power to do more good, had they possessed a better knowledge of it."⁴⁵ Such deficiency was felt in all branches of administration and there was a desire to improve. For example, a representation was submitted on behalf of the Nizamat Adalat for consideration of the Government of Bengal which said, "The Judges unanimously concur in the propriety generally of holding examinations before an officer is raised to the rank of Joint Magistrate of the 2nd grade. The first in particular, should, they think—embrace, an examination as to his knowledge of the vernaculars and should test his capability of reading, writing and conversing in them."⁴⁶ When Willoughby advocated in favour of vernacular education he pointed out to the necessity of training up of good mamlatdars, good village accountants, good police patels and "a host of other minor native function-

⁴⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 53, *Vide* Minute by Dunbar, 12 September 1851.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, J. R. Colvin to J. P. Grant, 23 September 1851.

aries for the public service.” But in the real working of administration, the urgency of vernacular was also felt in higher circles of services.

Among the people at large, and especially in Bengal, the indigenous language was brought into extensive use by the people themselves. The number of vernacular presses multiplied, and the circulation of vernacular books increased enormously.⁴⁷ In Bengal, several gentlemen, European and Indian, established a vernacular literature committee in 1851. J. E. D. Bethune who did not believe in the official introduction of the vernacular as a general scheme of education, nevertheless believed in the great benefit that would follow from the development of vernacular literature. He, therefore, became one of the patrons of the above committee. Within a year from its working the committee showed signs of “healthy and vigorous life”.⁴⁸

The state of education was very poor in the presidency of Madras. As was commented, “While Bengal has been maturing a system of education for the higher classes, to the neglect of the mass of the population, and Bombay has been slowly organising a system, Madras has actually done nothing”. In April 1852, the Governor Sir Henry Pottinger directed the University Board to submit to him “a plan for a system of instruction which should be really national in its scope.” The Madras College, it was seen, had not succeeded in acquiring the confidence of the people, the attendance in its classes was “miserably small”, and it was said that the people were “receiving education at the rate of one in a hundred thousand”. In such circumstances Henry

⁴⁷ *F.I.*, 22 April 1852.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 July 1852.

Pottinger appreciated the importance of the vernacular education.⁴⁹

It was, however, Thomason's experiment in the eight districts of Mathura, Agra, Bareilly, Etawah, Farrukhabad, Mainpuri, Aligarh and Shahjahanpur which attracted attention from all quarters. The report published from Agra by H. S. Reid, the visitor general, gave detailed particulars connected with the organisation and working of the system. The Bengal Council of Education which was lately thinking of introducing vernacular, sent its secretary, F. J. Mouat, to visit Thomason's experimental schools and gain a first-hand knowledge about their success.

As has been indicated earlier, Thomason's experiment was based upon the revenue system of the provinces under the Agra government. Its object had been "to work out a scheme of national instruction founded upon the indigenous efforts of the people themselves". Thomason aimed at overcoming the prejudices and the difficulties "which encumbered the path of a more systematic order of general instruction among a singularly suspicious, benighted and bigoted population" by putting his "novel scheme upon the pre-existing base so as to work with materials already familiar to the people, and thus startle them as little as possible with strange objects or innovations".⁵⁰ Thomason had established a normal school to train teachers for vernacular schools; had provided for government supervision, by such officers as the visitor general, the zillah visitors, and the parganah inspectors, of the schools under the scheme; had introduced the instruction of such subjects as arith-

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 December 1852.

⁵⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 54, Report of F. J. Mouat, 4 June 1853.

metic, algebra, geometry, geography and history for the students of the normal school who were required to teach the pupils of the tahasil schools; and had provided for a well-ordered system of education as against the system of old-fashioned schools.

The result of such experiment, in the estimation of F. J. Mouat, was "eminently successful". His first contact with a tahasil school occurred in the village of Roorkee, immediately adjoining the magnificent canal works. Accompanied by Captain Oldfield, the principal of the engineering college, he went on a horse one morning quite unexpectedly, "to see the system in its working dress, stripped of any of the gloss that might have thrown over it, had the visit and its object been known to or suspected by the master or pupils". The school was beyond the circles of the visitor general's district, its master was of the old regiment and not particularly bright or intelligent, yet the state of the institution was so creditable as to show that "a system must be good which produces superior work with inferior instruments." The pupils exhibited in examination a fair elementary knowledge of arithmetic and geography, and were able to trace the course of rivers on maps and to indicate the most important towns situated on them. Mouat felt that this school was decidedly better than any vernacular school he had seen in Bengal.

Most opportunely there was on the opposite side of the street an indigenous vernacular school, busily employed in the laborious physical exertion of shouting out certain arithmetical tables with the whole power of the small lungs of the urchins. Upon visiting it the utmost difference was at once perceptible between it and the well-ordered institution just across the road. Mouat noted,

"The bright eyed, little fellows were squatted upon the clay floor, without order or regularity, and were repeating in a sing song chorus what was first uttered with a strong nasal twang by the master. Arithmetic was the only branch in which they exhibited any degree of proficiency, and in this, one or two small boys worked out puzzling additions and multiplications of odd and fractional numbers with wonderful quickness and facility, but it was evidently a mere laborious effort of memory without any attempt to expand the intellect or educate the senses. Of geography, geometry, or anything else they seemed to know nothing whatever".⁵¹

F. J. Mouat, after a complete review of Thomason's experimental schools, submitted his report on 4 June 1853. He had visited several of the tahasil schools established under the new system, as well as the old indigenous schools which were brought under the government superintendence. At Aligarh he saw a congregation of pupils from several schools which impressed him so much as to say, "During my long connection with education in India, and familiarity with the attainments and appearance of the pupils of all castes and classes, I never witnessed a more gratifying and interesting scene."⁵² Each school read and explained in succession passages from the vernacular readers prepared for them, answered questions in geography and displayed a quickness and accuracy in answering extremely difficult questions in geometry and arithmetic. At Agra he visited Mr. Reid's normal school or the Central Institution as it was called. As a training school for vernacular masters the institution showed a much higher order of instruction and acquirement.

⁵¹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 54, Report of F. J. Mount, 4 June 1853.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Mouat showed in his report that in the second year of its trial in the eight experimental districts sanctioned it had raised the number of boys receiving sound elementary education from 17,000 to 30,000; had thrown out the schools between 30 and 40,000 school class books of a better kind than those in use; and had given such an impetus to the course of vernacular education as could not fail in few years to produce the fruits that invariably resulted from a spread of knowledge in the right direction.⁵³ He was convinced that the scheme above referred to, was not only the best adapted to leaven the ignorance of the agricultural population of the North West Provinces, but was also the plan best suited for the vernacular education of the mass of people of Bengal and Bihar. Moreover, the scheme had the advantage of being efficiently worked out at a smaller cost than any other scheme, it contained nothing to shock the prejudices or rouse the passions of people, and it included in its practical introduction an admirable system of check and supervision. He, therefore, recommended for its immediate extension in the North Western Provinces and gradual introduction into Bengal and Bihar.⁵⁴

Soon after this, Thomason himself drew the attention of the supreme government to the success of his experiment and requested for permission to extend it further.

He recalled the condition of education before his scheme was introduced. "There was scarcely any appreciable agency for the education of the masses. Very few adults were possessed of the mere knowledge of reading and writing and the prospect of any improvement amongst the young was almost hopeless. Amongst

⁵³ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 54, Report of F. J. Mount, 4 June 1853.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

a people so grossly ignorant, the Government had introduced an artificial and elaborate system of record and registration, which rendered the security of all titles to landed property, dependent on the accuracy of written entries. It was evident that if ever this system, vitally affecting as it did the most cherished rights of the people, was to attain consistency and truthfulness, the people must be educated so as to be in a position to avail themselves of the opportunities it offered for the protection of their privileges".⁵⁵

It was not an easy undertaking to show the progress of a people in learning and intelligence during a brief space of time. Acting as the measures must for the most part, on the young, a considerable period was to elapse before those who were brought up under their influence came forward and took their place in society, and exercised a beneficial influence on the national character. Yet, as Thomason claimed, "since the operations commenced, a considerably increased number of youths have been brought under instruction, that the character of that instruction has been raised, and that a vernacular school literature has been created, well calculated to improve the minds of the people, and evidently showing that it has that effect by the avidity, with which it is sought after by the people."⁵⁶

Thomason annexed an entry which showed the number of schools and of scholars in Reid's eight experimental districts at the four periods when an attempt was made to enumerate them. The entry showed a very considerable increase of youths under

⁵⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 54, *Vide* W. Muir, Secretary to Government of N.W.P. to G.A.C. Plowden, Secretary to Government of India, 4 August 1853.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

instruction.* There was every reason to anticipate that the number was to increase more rapidly. Under the orders of government dated 8 June 1852 and of the Board of Revenue dated 10 September 1852, all persons in government employment were required to be able to read and write, while patwaries and the representatives of village communities were expected to have attained some proficiency in arithmetic and the mensuration of land. For these orders a sensibly increased desire for instruction was also marked. Besides, it was a satisfaction to Thomason and his friends that the quality of instruction had greatly improved. Education was formerly communicated to the pupils rather orally, or in a crude written character (Kaithi). Printed books were scarcely used and Urdu was seldom taught as a language, or employed as a vehicle of instruction. But with the experiment of the new scheme, printed books were universally used. Urdu schools were rising up in every direction and the Nagari or regular Hindi character was rapidly taking place of the Kaithi. The schools in which only Persian was taught were declining. To encourage this change, efforts were made to create a school literature. A large number of vernacular treatises, very concise and popular in their form, on all branches of knowledge in which it was desired to give instruction, were published.

Thus showing the result of his experiment, Thomason drew the attention of the Government of India. But he himself felt that as yet it was only a

* Period			Schools	Scholars
Before 1850	..	..	2014	17,169
In 1850-51	..	..	3127	28,636
in 1851-52	..	..	3329	31,843
in 1852-53	..	..	3469	36,884

small commencement which had been made in the work. "Even in Mr. Reid's eight districts, his closest research cannot discover that more than 209,123 persons out of a male population of 4,270,565 or less than 5 per cent. are able to read and to write, in the most imperfect manner, while there are 22 of the Regulation Districts in which operations such as these have not even yet commenced."⁵⁷ The Agra Government concluded, "It needs but the sanction of the highest authority to call into exercise throughout the whole length and breadth of the land, the same spirit of enquiry and the same mental activity which is now beginning to characterise the inhabitants of the few districts in which a commencement has been made." Thomason asked for permission to give effect to the whole scheme within the limits of 200,000 of rupees, which were calculated to be required for its full development.⁵⁸

Lord Dalhousie who had so far given his thought mainly to higher education* had to seriously think of the question of vernacular education after Thomason had drawn his attention to his success. Sir Charles Wood, who had then become the President of the Board of Control, too, thought about the matter of education in India and requested Dalhousie to let him know about the "existing matters as they are, and also what is feasible in the way of extension." Sir Charles was quite in the dark about the subject, and how much did he leave the matter to Dalhousie is known from what he said to him soon after assuming the India Office.

"I am also a good deal at sea on Education as

⁵⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 54, Letter from Government of N.W.P., 4 August 1853.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

* See Appendix D.

indeed we all are in England. Everybody is for doing more than we do, and no five people agree in what ought to be done. I have had no time to look into it myself and I don't see anybody who can give me a very un-biassed opinion, so I shall be more obliged to you for enlightening me about it."⁵⁹

The unexpected death of Thomason on 27 September 1853 pained Dalhousie greatly, but thereafter he was seen to have taken up Thomason's cause with zeal. As he felt, "...even though Mr. Thomason had left no other memorial of his public life behind him, this system of general Vernacular Education, which is all his own, would have sufficed to build up for him a noble and abiding monument of his earthly career."⁶⁰ His estimate of Thomason's work was correct. Because, it was the Thomasonian system which became the basis of the government scheme of general education in India.

Within a week of Thomason's death, the Bengal Council of Education wrote to the Government, "It is now so generally acknowledged that the Education of the great body of a people must be through the medium of their own vernacular language; that the Council accept it as a truth that needs no discussion, since all men are agreed upon it." The council recollected how as early as 1834 Mr. Adam had examined the state of vernacular education and had reported in its favour, but his recommendation was not adopted at the time "because the means of carrying it into effect,—money, masters and books—were not available". After due consideration the council now proposed to establish in each zillah, in which the experiment was to be tried,

⁵⁹ D.P., Letters from Board of Control, Wood to Dalhousie, 19 August 1853.

⁶⁰ D.P., Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiv, 24 October 1853.

four model vernacular schools; and to organise the necessary staff to visit and inspect the existing vernacular schools of those districts.⁶¹ It was to Thomason's credit that the Bengal council accepted the leading features of his plan which it thought to be as applicable to Bengal, as they had been to the Agra districts. The features were, a general controlling authority, a subordinate visiting agency, the introduction of a better class of books, and a suitable system of rewards for such indigenous schools as would submit to inspection and visit.⁶²

Dalhousie issued his famous minute on the vernacular education on 25 October 1853, within less than a month of Thomason's death. This was the first effective proposal from the Indian Government to the authorities in England about the education of the people, and it came in a right moment when consequent upon the revision of the Company's charter, the authorities were willing to adopt a broader educational policy.

Dalhousie pointed out that five years ago he had the honour of recommending to the Court of Directors a scheme prepared by the Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces for promotion of vernacular education, by the institution of schools in each tahsil on the part of the government. The scheme which was designed ultimately for the whole of the 31 districts within the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant Governor, was limited for the time to eight of those districts. The Court was pleased to accede to the recommendation, and the scheme was thereafter carried into effect. The Governor-General showed that during three years which

⁶¹ *Selections from Records of Bengal Govt.*, no. xxii, 1855, Mouat to Beadon, 3 October 1853.

⁶² *S.E.R.*, Part II, pp. 97-98.

since had elapsed the experiment had shown eminent success. He wrote therefore,

"I beg leave to recommend in the strongest terms to the Hon'ble Court of Directors that full sanction should be given to the extension of the scheme of Vernacular Education to all the districts within the jurisdiction of the North Western Provinces, with every adjunct which may be necessary for its complete efficiency."⁶³

This recommendation was in accordance with the proposal of the late Thomason for whose experiment the Court had earlier sanctioned, as described above. But Dalhousie now aimed further and said,

"This will provide for the wants of the North Western Provinces, but other vast Governments remain, with a people as capable of learning as those in Hindoostan, and a population still more teeming. There too the same wants prevail, and the same moral obligation rests upon the Government to exert itself for the purpose of dispelling the present ignorance.

"Those wants ought to be provided for, those obligations ought to be met."⁶⁴

He reminded that it was the plain duty of the Government of India at once to place within the reach of the people of Bengal and Bihar those means of education which the government had hitherto failed in presenting to them in an acceptable form. On the authority of Dr. Mouat, Dalhousie believed and therefore informed the Court that Thomason's scheme could be applicable to Bengal and Bihar as well.

"And not to Bengal and Behar only. If it be good

⁶³ D.P., Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiv, 25 October 1853.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

for these it is good also for our new subjects beyond the Jumna. That it will be not only good for them but most acceptable to them, no one can doubt who has read the reports by Mr. Montgomery and other Commissioners upon indigenous education in the Punjab, which showed results that were little anticipated before they were discovered.”⁶⁵

The Governor-General could not have sent all such recommendations without considering their financial aspects. The cost of the entire scheme for the provinces under the authority of the Lieutenant Governor was something more than two lakhs of rupees. Dalhousie calculated that the Punjab and Bengal together would not cost more than double that sum. Lest the authorities might object even to this amount, he pleaded that this expenditure had been more than provided for already by the recent death of Benaik Rao, whereby a clear addition of seven lakhs of rupees had been given to the annual revenues of the Government of India.

“Were it otherwise”, argued Dalhousie, “It would still be the undoubted duty of the Government to proceed: Until lately the financial condition of India for many years past has required, that the Government should observe a prudent caution in every advance it made, even for the best of purposes and upon the straightest road.

“Financial considerations no longer shackle the progress of the Government.

“Wherefore it is more than ever before its duty in every such case as this, to act vigorously, cordially, promptly.”⁶⁶

⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiv, 25 October 1853.

⁶ *Ibid.*

From this time Dalhousie's deep interest in the subject of education is proved by the subsequent steps he took. He was anxious to put the scheme into operation in Bengal at the earliest convenience and requested the Government of Bengal to take up this highly important subject in communication with the authorities subordinate to it.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ *Selections from Records of Bengal Government*, no. xxii, 1855, Letter from Government of India, 4 November 1853.

CHAPTER VII

The Circumstances Leading to the Introduction of Vernacular Education into India.

PART II

During the later half of 1853, when the Government of India sent its recommendations in favour of a general scheme of vernacular education, Sir Charles Wood as the President of the Board of Control was busy considering his future despatch. Among the papers of Wood, there is a good deal of information regarding education in India. It is evident that Wood's attention was concentrated upon the subject from the time of the parliamentary discussions on the India Bill during June-July 1853. One of the chief points of inquiry before the committees of both Houses of Parliament was the subject of education in India,¹ and Wood took it up immediately thereafter.

The Wood Papers, however, betray a few things. Wood himself had no adequate knowledge of the subject, he was confused for a while whether to back higher education or the elementary; in either case he was influenced by developments in India as well as by ideas of others; but finally he aimed at claiming the greater credit for himself for most of the measures.

There were people in Great Britain to encourage the cause of Indian education as well as to discourage it.

¹ W.P., I.B.P., Various Stages of Education Draft, 1st stage.

The question was discussed from different angles of view, mainly political and religious. To some, education was necessary to improve administration. To others, spread of education was likely to result in discontent against the British rule. The missionaries advocated in favour of education if it supported the spread of Christianity. If education was secular, they thought it dangerous. Suggestions came from different quarters for consideration of the authorities and the President had to form an opinion out of them. Among the warnings he received, some are notable. A memorandum dated September 1852, and submitted to Wood by some one who did not write his name but signed as G.R.L. runs thus :

“The Government of India is doing something towards educating the natives (more under the Bombay Presidency than elsewhere), and in proportion to its vast population, as compared with the state of the education of the people in England, may be said to be doing a good deal, and doing it systematically.... I recorded my opinion at length on this subject while in India in 1843, and again in 1847. Thus we are educating the people of India. They have much capacity for learning; and their minds, always intelligent, are becoming informed, among other things, of that course of European progress, which consists in restlessness, desire of change, excitement, and visions of free institutions indulged by a people, whether fit, or not at all, prepared for them. Naturally, those minds will soon be working against British rule unless engaged to co-operate cordially with it in the Government of their country.... The phrase of the day, for reconciling the English public to the hopeful view of its being expelled from India by the progress of the natives in civilisation, or in revolutionary ideas, or

of its army in disaffection, is 'in God's name let it be so'. I should rather pray, regarding only the welfare of the people, that, God forbid."²

Lord Elphinstone, at one time the Governor of Madras,* told Wood, "The advancement of the natives to higher office must go hand in hand with the progress of education. If this is not attended to, our efforts to educate the people will only lead to disappointment and alienation on their part."³ The Church Missionary Society in its long memorial to the authorities reminded that the main purpose of education in India should be for "the removal of certain obnoxious measures, which are repugnant to the Christian character of the nation—which obstruct the progress of Christianity in India."⁴

A very practical suggestion came to Charles Wood from John Marshman, who, for his long acquaintance with India, had sufficient knowledge of educational affairs. He pointed out that the subject of education in India naturally divided itself into two branches, English and Vernacular. For the former, he advocated that "Larger funds should be diverted to the English department, with the view of improving the institutions which already exist, and of increasing their number." "But it is scarcely possible for Government", said Marshman, "to establish schools and seminaries, English and Vernacular, in sufficient numbers to meet the exigencies of the country....It would therefore be highly beneficial to the interests of Education in India to transplant to it,

² *W.P., I.B.C.*, Memorandum on Education, Dated September 1852 from G.R.L.

* "It is now 17 years since I was appointed Governor of Madras," said Elphinstone in 1853. "In that interval I have seen something of India and of people well acquainted with India."

³ *W.B., I.B.C.*, Elphinstone to Wood, 4 April 1853.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Memorial of Church Missionary Society, May 1853.

the system of Grants-in-aid which has been found to work so beneficially in England, and thus to secure the co-operation of those who are deeply interested in the cause of Education.”⁵ He further said, “In order to complete the system of English Education at each Presidency, it appears desirable to meet the universal and unanimous wish of the community, European and native, by the establishment of a University at each Presidency....”⁶ About vernacular education Marshman clearly pointed out,

“The importance of giving instruction to the great body of the people, who have neither leisure nor opportunities for the acquisition of a foreign language, through the medium of their mother tongue has never been sufficiently appreciated, and the efforts which have been made in this department of labour have therefore been feeble and unsuccessful.”

He pointed out that the council of education at Bombay was divided in opinion on the subject. The council in Calcutta was opposed to any plan of education which had not English for its basis. He felt it desirable that government should terminate this conflict of opinion by an authoritative declaration of its resolution that in addition to the schools and colleges designed for the instruction of the superior classes through the medium of English, an enlarged and adequate system of education through the indigenous language of the country should be forthwith established. Marshman proposed to establish five or six vernacular schools in each district as a commencement, and to extend the

⁵ *Ibid.*, Notes on Education by Marshman, 12 November 1853.

⁶ *Ibid.*

principle of grants-in-aid to vernacular schools throughout the country.*

At this time (November 1853), Dalhousie informed the President from Calcutta, "I have now on its way a very large proposal for native education in the three divisions of the Presidency of Bengal. Another proposal for a general college here is also on its way. These, I am sure from what you have already said, will meet with a favourable reception from you."⁷

Wood was himself giving much time to think on education. He understood the scheme on English education submitted by others. But on vernacular education his mind was rather puzzled. On receiving elaborate explanation from Marshman, on the subject, he said,

"I confess that I do not see my way as yet. I cannot make out to what extent there are existing schools which could avail themselves of the system of grants-in-aid. I do not know either what the village schools are. If as I suppose there are a great number of indifferent schools, I do not see how we could embark on so gigantic an undertaking as rendering assistance and inspecting a school in every village."⁸

Upon this Marshman clarified his point that his suggestion did not embrace the grant of assistance and the visit of a government inspector to a school in every village. Of the indigenous schools, he argued, there was perhaps not one to be found in ten villages and they

* "In every case in which a vernacular school is established by a native gentleman, or a benevolent European, or a jealous Missionary, Government should be prepared to contribute one half the expense", said Marshman.

⁷ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 17 Nov. 1853.

⁸ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iv, p. 1, Wood to Marshman, 22 November 1853.

were not only so very elementary and so utterly wretched in character, but were apparently so completely incapable of improvement, that government aid would be entirely thrown away upon them. He was convinced moreover that with all the stimulus that could be given, the number of elementary schools would continue for many years rather to be too small than too large.

"All that, in the present incipient stage of the business, we could ask the Indian authorities at home to do in reference to vernacular instruction, is", said Marshman, "to announce from the seat of authority that vernacular education is recognised as a part of the educational machinery of the state, instead of leaving it, as at present, an unsettled question, the sport of conflicting prejudices;—and also that the principle of grants-in-aid, without reference to the creed which may be taught, has the fullest sanction of the Board of Control, and the Court of Directors. Without such a declaration which no one will be able to gainsay or resist, there is much reason to fear—and the latest information from India gives strength to those fears—that the remains of antiquated prejudices in India may postpone the practical adoption of it for an indefinite period. To these two desiderata I would add an appropriation of funds not exceeding 15,000 or 20,000 £ a year for the exclusive object of Vernacular schools at the four Presidencies to be distributed at the discretion of the Supreme Government, and applied under the direction of the respective Governors and Lieutenant Governors."⁹

Wood began developing a favourable attitude towards elementary education, but began to suspect higher education. In January 1854, Alexander Duff submitted

⁹ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Marshman to Wood, 28 November 1853.

a memorandum describing fundamental principles on which Indian education was to be based. To him, in India there were endless erroneous systems—systems which, to a large or less extent, embodied much of what was notoriously false, not only in morals and religion, but also in history, chronology, geography, astronomy and other branches, commonly distinguished by Europeans as purely secular, but which, from being taught in the sacred and learned books of the Hindus and Muhammedans, were regarded by them as of divine authority. On this account, Duff felt that the only wise and safe policy for the British Government would be to lay it down as a fundamental principle, that its assistance must be restricted to the promotion of improved European knowledge, literary and scientific, whether in elementary or higher forms, and whether conveyed through the media of the vernacular or English languages. He was convinced that the basis of all natural education must be vernacular, and therefore, asked the government to declare authoritatively its determination to encourage an improved vernacular education; but vernacular as the lingual media of instruction, whereas, improved European knowledge as the main subject matter of instruction.¹⁰ Alexander Duff, however, could not think of a system of education in India without associating it with Christianity. He warned the Board of Control:

“If in that land (India) you give the people knowledge without religion, rest assured that it is the greatest blunder, politically speaking, that ever was committed. Having free unrestricted access to the whole range of our English literature and science, they

¹⁰ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Memorandum by Alexander Duff, 25 January 1854.

will despise and reject their own absurd systems of learning. Once driven out of their own systems, they will inevitably become infidels in religion. And shaken out of the mechanical routine of their own religious observances, without moral principle to balance their thoughts or guide their movements, they will as certainly become discontented, restless agitators,—ambitious of power and official distinction, and possessed of the most disloyal sentiments towards that Government, which, in their eye, has usurped all the authority that rightfully belonged to themselves. This is not theory, it is a statement of fact. I myself can testify in this place, as I have already done on the spot, that expressions and opinions of a most rebellious nature have been known to drop from some of the very proteges of that government, which, for its own sake, is so infatuated as to insist on giving knowledge apart from religion. But as soon as some of these become converts to Christianity....how totally different their tone of feeling towards the existing government!"¹¹

Wood had a good deal of conversation with F. J. Halliday who, for his long association with Bengal, knew much about the subject, and the President thought that if Halliday be appointed Lieutenant Governor of Bengal he might well try his hand at organising something. He at first thought of "a trial system and if it succeeds, a model."

What would be the main object of his education despatch seems to have confused Wood for some time. At first the idea of a university education at the expense of the government seems to have dominated his mind. He said to Dalhousie,

¹¹ *W.P., I.B.C., Memorandum by Alexander Duff, 25 January 1854.*

"I hope that we shall govern India for many years, but it is clear to my mind that we shall always govern it as *aliens* not settling in the country or having much in common with the mass of the people whom we govern."¹²

The President saw the number of Europeans employed in the Indian Civil Service to be somewhere between seven hundred and eight hundred and he felt it to be a very small body to rule such an empire. This led him to think that the Indians might occasionally be placed in situations which were meant for the Europeans and wanted to see such appointments from time to time. "It follows from these views that the employment of natives in high places must be attained by adding such places to those already existing and I believe this to be advisable, not only for the purpose of providing a career for the improved and educated native, but also for improving our administration in almost all our departments". He saw enough symptoms of the Indians being men capable of such employment, and of their great anxiety to participate in it.

Lord Ellenborough had warned the President that "education will be fatal" to the British rule. "So it may be" thought Wood, "unless we accompany education by suitable measures." "I see no reason why it should not strengthen our hold in India if we act wisely in regard to the educated natives. Of course we must be prepared for an increase in the expense of our administration, and I believe it to be money well spent. I should endeavour to enlist in the service of the Government those who might otherwise employ their talents and energies against us, and attach to us by their interest

¹² *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iv, pp. 12-16, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 Nov. 1853.

those who might be our most formidable enemies.”¹³ On this matter, he requested the Governor-General to make a good start, because, as he felt, his experience would enable him “to do it better than any one else could.”

Lord Dalhousie's interest in the meantime was diverted more towards general education. His purpose “to establish a complete class of vernacular schools, to extend throughout the whole of India, with a view to convey instruction to the masses of the people” received praise from many quarters.¹⁴ He, too, wanted the higher education of the people, especially at Calcutta, to be “placed upon a footing adequate to the wants of the community, and worthy of the Government of the Hon'ble Company.”¹⁵ At the beginning of 1854, Sir Charles Wood became glad to hear that Dalhousie had a scheme for education on the anvil. He told the Governor-General, “I am convinced that any detailed scheme for the purpose must come from India, and must I think be experimental in a great degree. If you can establish a good system in any portion of India it will serve as a model for the rest.”¹⁶ He became very anxious to see the scheme promised to him by Lord Dalhousie. At this time Wood's main consideration was that of a university education. “It seems to me that the easiest step is a university”, he said to Elphinstone, even though he did not regard it to be “the most useful.” He thought of the London University as the model he should take

¹³ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iv, pp. 12-16, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 Nov. 1853.

¹⁴ *Hurkaru*, 5 December 1853; *Friend of India*, 1 December 1853 and *Allen's Indian Mail*, 31 January 1854.

¹⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiv, 17 October 1853.

¹⁶ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iv, p. 78, Wood to Dalhousie, 4 January 1854.

and said, "A scheme of this kind would completely meet, as it seems to me, all the Indian difficulties."¹⁷

While the London authorities gave primary concern to university education in India, the local governments of Bengal, Bombay and the Punjab, supported and encouraged by the Governor-General, started introducing the system of elementary education in their respective provinces. Before Sir Charles Wood had finalised his famous scheme in July 1854, in all the presidencies of India, the local governments had been able to give effect to the recommendations of Lord Dalhousie. In Bengal Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the principal of the Sanskrit College, whose merit and integrity Dalhousie fully recognised, exerted a good deal to give effect to the proposed system. Vidyasagar's views were,

"Vernacular Education on an extensive scale and on an efficient footing is highly desirable. For it is by this means alone that the condition of the mass of the people can be ameliorated.

"Mere reading and writing and a little of arithmetic should not comprise the whole of this education. Geography, History, Biography, Arithmetic, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, Political Economy, and Physiology should be taught to render it complete."¹⁸ (See Appendix E).

The Bengal Council of Education began to work out a system according to the proposals adopted by itself, keeping in view the Thomasonian system. The proposals of the council received full assent from the Governor-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-6, Wood to Elphinstone, 24 January 1854.

¹⁸ *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 13, no. 105, Notes on Vernacular Education by Ishwar Chandra Sarma, 7 February 1854.

General.¹⁹ In the Punjab, under orders from the Governor-General, the judicial commissioner, R. Montgomery, began to experiment the Thomasonian system in three districts of that province.²⁰ He had consulted the commissioners of the three largest divisions in the Punjab, viz., Lahore, Trans Sutlej states and Cis Sutlej states, and all of them arrived at the conclusion that elementary educational measures would be fraught with blessings to the people, and that it would be perfectly practicable in execution. About the proper style of education to be enforced in the Punjab tahsil schools, and to be enjoined in the indigenous schools, the commissioners were inspired by the system of the North West Provinces. Only difficulty they felt was about the language to be taught. As Montgomery put it,

“The language through which the instructions should be conveyed in the Punjab, may, however, demand some remark. The language used might be either Punjabee with Goormookhee character, or with the Persian character, or mixed Hindoostani and Punjabee that is grammar and structure, Hindoostani with Punjabee phrases and idioms and written in the Persian or Hindee character or pure Oordoo and Hindee.”²¹

When the proposals of the Punjab Government were placed before Dalhousie, he felt that there was no necessity for further experimental measures and therefore ordered for the establishment of the scheme throughout the Punjab at once instead of experimenting in three districts as desired by some of the Punjab administrators. He further recommended for the establish-

¹⁹ *D.P.*, Letters to Governors & Lt. Governors, Dalhousie to Halliday, 13 May 1854.

²⁰ *I.H.C.*, 188 [vol. 8, Montgomery to Melville, 7 March 1854.

²¹ *Ibid.*

ment of a number of normal schools as a part of the original plan.²²

The Bombay Board of Education gave notice in May 1854 that they were prepared to receive applications from the inhabitants of all towns and villages who were desirous of having a vernacular school established, and who at the same time were prepared to prove their anxiety for the establishment of such a school, by agreeing to assist in supporting it to the following extent: (1) to pay half the salary of the master; (2) to provide and keep in repair a suitable school house and ordinary school furniture; (3) to defray all contingent expenses; (4) each boy to pay a monthly fee of one anna; and (5) each boy to provide himself with the requisite class books.²³

While the authorities in India thus began giving encouragement to vernacular education, Sir Chales Wood, too, gave his serious attention to the subject. As has been seen earlier, persons like John Marshman had advocated for the above cause. The statistical information gathered about education showed how the subject had been neglected by the government. In Bengal, it was seen, the whole of the attention of the council of education had been directed to increasing the number of English colleges and schools, whereas the "education of the masses in Bengal was altogether neglected except almost accidentally in Assam." "The general result of the information showed that in the North Western Provinces alone was there anything approaching to a systematic scheme for educating or improving the education of the people." Of the total sum of £90,000 spent

²² *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 8, Dalhousie's Minute, 6 June 1854.

²³ *S.E.R.*, Part II, pp. 171-72.

by the government on education, only £13,000 were spent on vernacular education.²⁴ Of this sum of £13,000, a substantial portion was devoted only lately when Thomason's system was put into effect in the North Western Provinces.

Various drafts on education preserved among Wood Papers show that the East India House was aware of the development in India.* It recognised that the "formation or encouragement of vernacular schools, where the great mass of the people might receive instruction suited to their condition in life, has only lately been engaged in on a systematic plan", and recommended the subject in the following terms, "...it is impossible not to feel, on a consideration of the facts of which we have now taken a brief review, that the time has arrived when measures of a far wider scope should be adopted, for affording to the various classes of society in India the means of obtaining a sound, practical education suited to their several conditions and circumstances."²⁵ A picture of a complete system of colleges and schools, in regular gradations from the vernacular schools upwards, was thought of. It was felt desirable that, in accordance with the experimental measures in operation in the North Western Provinces, vernacular schools of a superior class should be maintained by government in such numbers as might be required throughout the country, each of which would be the centre of a system of village schools and serve as a model on which those should be conducted. In order to secure a thorough efficiency of any extended plan of general education, establishment of a regular

²⁴ *W.P., I.B.P.*, Stages of Education Draft, 1st Stage.

* See Appendix—F.

²⁵ *W.P., I.B.P.*, Stages of Education Draft, 2nd stage, Note from E. I. House.

system of inspection and organisation of normal schools where young men were to be trained in the art of teaching, were thought to be indispensably necessary. Taking all these things into consideration, the directors of the East India Company made the following request to the President of the Board of Control,

"It is our desire that you should frame a general scheme applicable to the whole of India, which may be put in force, with due regard to local circumstances, by the Governments of the several Presidencies; and we shall be prepared to sanction whatever expenditure may prove necessary to carry out with efficiency the various measures which may ultimately be determined on. We shall await the result of your deliberations with the greatest interest and in the full assurance, that you will cordially concur with us in promoting an object so directly affecting the welfare and happiness of the population committed to our Government and will spare no pains to carry it out in an effectual manner."²⁶

It was said that after a lapse of twenty years, and a considerable outlay of public money, no more than 9,000 youths attended the government English schools, while but 20,000 were in any degree brought under the influence of the different systems of government vernacular education, and that the numerical result was insignificant indeed in relation to the eight millions of youth of an age fit for instruction in the British India.²⁷

The President saw that in Bombay, where considerable attention had been given to vernacular education, there were 216 vernacular schools with little over 12,000 pupils; in Bengal in thirty-three government vernacular

²⁶ *W.P., I.B.P., Stages of Education Draft, 2nd stage, Note from E. I. House.*

²⁷ *Ibid., 3rd stage, (Education, 1st copy.)*

schools the number of pupils was only 1400; and in Madras there were no efforts made by the government to encourage the vernacular education.²⁸ These facts had their bearing upon Wood's scheme.

The President who had earlier thought in favour of a higher education and employment of the people of India to government services, perhaps realised on a second thought that "if they become intelligent from education they may be dangerous." While he was making his draft despatch nearly ready, he said to Dalhousie, "It seems to me that by promoting the high education of the natives and providing no career for them we are weakening ourselves. We cannot honestly as Ellenborough would do withhold the first, and therefore we ought to look to the accompaniment of the second. I am however very much for directing our educational efforts much more to general than to high education."²⁹ Wood's subsequent letters would speak more about his apprehensions.

Perhaps it was the President's suspicion of the higher education which led him to think that "at Calcutta especially too much in proportion has been done for the higher students and too little for the education of the body of the people", and therefore, as he said, he was "not all satisfied with things as they are".³⁰ It may be pointed out here that Lord Dalhousie on the other hand, a little while ago (October 1853), had announced that "the Government has not done for the encouragement of sound education in this capital (Calcutta) all that was desirable, or even all that would have been its positive duty...." He had pointed out that while Agra, Delhi, Benares and many other places of lesser note and inferior importance

²⁸ *W.P., I.B.P.*, Stages of Edn. Draft, 2nd stage, Note from E. I. House.

²⁹ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 30-32, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 April 1854.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-18, Wood to Dalhousie, 8 June 1854.

possessed a government college each for general instruction, in Calcutta, the metropolis of the British dominions in the East, there was no general college at all.³¹ Of course there was the Madrisa, but it had been established for the special advantage of the Mussulmans. The Hindu College and the Sanskrit College were set apart for the use of the Hindus. Lord Dalhousie therefore recommended that "A new general college should be established at Calcutta by the Government, which would be termed 'The Presidency College', in order to distinguish it by name from all merely local and private institutions, and in order to give it an official character."³² But while supporting the cause of higher education he also wanted to encourage the primary education in the capital and said,

"It is, in my humble judgment, the clear duty of the Government of India to provide for its people in this city, the seat of Government, such educational institutions as shall afford to all who seek there the means of acquiring sound instruction, both in elementary knowledge and in the higher branches of learning."³³

But Sir Charles Wood, who already had in hand a draft on education for India and which he thought to be so important a subject that he wished to have it well weighed before it went, said to Dalhousie,

"I care very little about teaching Hindoos to read Bacon and to be examined as we should be for honours at Oxford. I have no objection to their acquiring that education, but I am against paying them for acquiring it as we do in the Government schools and Government scholarships. I am inclined to think that these highly

³¹ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiv, 17 October 1853.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

educated natives are likely to be a very discontented class unless they are employed, and we cannot find employment for them all."³⁴

In contrast with such views of the President, it is interesting to note what the Governor-General felt about teaching Hindus and paying them for acquiring higher knowledge. While thinking of a university at Calcutta he said,

"The time, I doubt not, will come, though it is probably still in the distant future, when the Presidency College, having elevated itself by its reputation and being enriched by endowments and scholarships, will extend its sphere of attraction far beyond the local limits which it is now designed to serve; and when, strengthened by the most distinguished scholars from other cities, and united with the Medical College in all its various departments, as well as with other professorships of practical science and art whose establishment cannot be long postponed, it will expand itself into something approaching to the dignity and proportions of an Indian University."

Lord Dalhousie was sorry to feel,

"I cannot ever expect to see it, even from a distance, ripen into such maturity. But foreseeing that such a day will come, I am anxious at this time that all our present plans should provide that skilful care shall watch over its growth, and that fullest scope shall be afforded for its expansion."³⁵

Wood's main object, in his words, developed to be "for leaving high education to be mainly supported by those who are anxious for it, and to devote the main part

³⁴ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 116-18, Wood to Dalhousie, 8 June 1854.

³⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiv, 17 October 1853.

of Government funds to promoting more general education among the people."³⁶ He said,

"I am much more anxious to improve those who will turn to useful avocations in a lower sphere, and make good clerks, good judges (?), perhaps, good railroad servants, good civil engineers for ordinary works, good policemen and village accountants and measurers."³⁷

Dalhousie's motive in this respect was more pious. While Wood expressed his opinion (8 June 1854), almost at the same time (6 June 1854), Dalhousie recommended for the introduction of vernacular education in the Punjab and declared that the education should be given because among the people there was "an eager appetite for instruction", and because education "will exercise the best effect upon the character of the people."³⁸

The time of the education despatch was drawing nearer. In India, the authorities were proceeding in advance, on certain educational measures, whereas in England the Board of Control and the East India House were finalising their scheme. Dalhousie represented the advance policy of the Indian Government; and Charles Wood prepared to claim credit as maker of the education scheme. A clash of ambition and of personalities almost became obvious. A few days before Charles Wood gave out his education despatch, Dalhousie wrote to him,

"I told you I had several large measures in progress. In November I sent you one of them—a scheme of general Vernacular Education for all the North Western Provinces: but you have not alluded to it. I am just now sending you a large proposal for a general college here,

³⁶ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 116-18, Wood to Dalhousie, 8 June 1854.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 8, Dalhousie's Minute, 6 June 1854.

long and grievously wanted. By next mail I shall send you a scheme of Vernacular Education for the Punjab, similar to that for the North West Provinces, and a similar one for Bengal is in the hands of the Lieutenant-Governor. When these are with the Court I shall have played my part in the matter of Education. I hope the Home authorities will follow it up."³⁹

Charles Wood, who at first depended on the Indian Government for recommendations and schemes on future educational system, of late began to depend more on himself, and by the time of the education despatch, seems to have developed an indifferent attitude towards all that was done by Lord Dalhousie. He hurried himself to finalise the education despatch before Dalhousie's schemes had been publicised or placed before the notice of the Parliament. Suggestions from India were no longer necessary or desirable. For example, when Cecil Beadon with his knowledge of the Indian affairs advocated in favour of more high scholarships, Wood dismissed the suggestion saying,

"I do not see the advantage of rearing up a number of highly educated gentlemen, at the expense of the State, whom you cannot employ, and who will naturally become depositaries of discontent. If they choose to educate themselves, well and good, but I am against providing our own future detractors and opponents, and grumblers."⁴⁰

Wood's Education Despatch aimed to outline a great plan upon which the state education in India was in future to be based. Four great changes were thought of, (a) the supercession of Councils by a department of

³⁹ *W.P., I.B.C.*, Dalhousie to Wood, 13 June 1854.

⁴⁰ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 210-16, *vide* Wood to Halliday, 24 July 1854.

Public Instruction in each Presidency; (b) the creation of universities on the plan of the university of London; (c) the absolute equality of the English education "for the upper ten thousand", and vernacular instruction for the masses; and (d) the universal and formal sanction of grants-in-aid, without distinction of creed, and hampered by no condition, except "the right of the giver to watch the application of his gift."⁴¹

Finally, the famous Education Despatch dated 19 July 1854 came under the signature of the directors of the East India Company to the Government of India. The Despatch opened with the words : "Among many subjects of importance, none can have a stronger claim to our attention than that of Education. It is one of our most sacred duties to be the means of conferring upon the natives of India those vast moral and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of useful knowledge, and which India may, under providence, derive from her connection with England."⁴² The authors of the Despatch could think of several beneficial results to emanate from the spread of education. For example, the advance of education was alone to secure a general sympathy in the Indian mind towards the British efforts "to uproot demoralising practices, and even crimes of a deeper dye", which for ages had prevailed among the people of India; it was not only to produce a higher degree of intellectual fitness, but to raise the moral character of those who were to become the servants of every grade in all departments of the state; spread of education was also to bring to the people of India "the marvellous results of the employment of labour and capital",

⁴¹ *F.I.*, 13 July 1854.

⁴² *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 367, Education Despatch, 19 July 1854.

and rouse them to emulate the Englishmen in the development of the vast resources of their country, and, at the same time, secure to Englishmen a larger and more certain supply of many articles necessary for British manufacturers, as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour. An education, to achieve all such results, was to be nothing but European knowledge, though to be spread both in English and vernacular languages.

The Despatch gave first place to the subject of general education and the authorities clarified that it was neither their aim nor desire to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country and that they had always been most sensible of the importance of the use of the languages which alone were understood by the great mass of the population. Those languages, as they pointed out, and not English had been put by them in the place of Persian in the administration of justice and in the intercourse between the officers of the government and the people. "It is indispensable, therefore", said the Despatch, "that, in any general system of education, the study of them should be assiduously attended to, and any acquaintance with improved European Knowledge which is to be communicated to the great mass of the people—whose circumstances prevent them from acquiring a high order of education, and who cannot be expected to overcome the difficulties of a foreign language—can only be conveyed to them through one or other of those vernacular languages."⁴³

Aided by the ample experience of past and the most competent advice for future, the makers of the Despatch decided the mode in which the assistance of government

⁴³ S.E.R., Part II, p. 367, Education Despatch, 19 July 1854.

should be afforded to the more extended and systematic promotion of general education, and wrote to the Governor-General,

"By sanctioning grants-in-aid to private efforts, we hope to call to the assistance of Government private exertions and private liberality. The higher classes will now be gradually called upon to depend more upon themselves; and your attention has been more especially directed to the education of the middle and lower classes, both by the establishment of fitting schools for this purpose and by means of a careful encouragement of the native schools which exist, and have existed from time immemorial, in every village. . ."⁴⁴

The Despatch recommended for the encouragement and improvement of indigenous schools, for their supervision by the government agency, for the application of the system of grants-in-aid, and for the establishment of normal schools to train a better class of teachers for the pupils of vernacular schools.

No sooner the Despatch was out than Charles Wood came out to blow his trumpet. He boasted in a letter to Frederick James Halliday, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, saying, "The Government of India will receive by this mail a despatch on the subject of general education in India, which we have taken great pains in preparing, and which has been, I am very glad to say, warmly approved by all persons here who take an interest in the subject. I hope that it will be well received in India, and as you will have a good deal to do in practically carrying it into effect, I am anxious to commend it to your attention."⁴⁵ To Lord Harris, the Governor

⁴ *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 367, Education Despatch, 19 July 1854.

⁵ *W.P.*, *L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 210-16, Wood to Halliday, 24 July 1854.

of Madras, he said, "You will receive either by this mail or the next the copy of a long despatch on education which we have taken great pains about, and which has been approved by all the learned men on the subject here in England."⁴⁶ To Dalhousie he wrote,

"We send you out by this mail a draft on Education, giving a general scheme for India, which will I am aware, require modifications to render it applicable in each part of India. We wished however to send out with the sanction of the Home Government a general scheme. Macaulay, Lord Glenelg, Bayley and Prinsep, Marshman, the Church missionaries, Terry, Mouat, Beadon and everybody we could think of here, as being an authority on the subject, has been consulted and have cordially approved the scheme. So I hope that it will be well received in India, and that you will be able to set it going under your auspices."⁴⁷

The President was aware that however good a scheme of this kind might be, the practical working of it, was of more importance still, and much more would depend upon the men appointed to carry out the details than on any skill in devising it. He requested the Governor-General, "I shall be personally obliged to you to give as much countenance to it as you can."⁴⁸

The Education Despatch aimed at two main things, the establishment of universities and the encouragement of vernacular education. The Indian Government, it may be said, had prepared the ground for both. Lord Dalhousie's scheme for the Presidency College was clearly drawn up for the purpose of a university; and about vernacular education, enough had already been done by

⁴⁶ *W.P., L.B.*, p. 226, Wood to Harris, 24 July 1854.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 244-46, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 July 1854.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

his government. But the Despatch shows that the Home authorities overlooked the efforts of the Indian Government. Dalhousie felt slighted and his reaction was bitter.

But before the Governor-General had reacted, the President said to him, "I am very well pleased to see what you have done as to your Presidency College at Calcutta. It harmonises very well with our university scheme".⁴⁹ About vernacular education, he said a little while later, "The scheme for vernacular education in the North West Provinces never came up at the time when you sent it, and I only disinterred it from the E.I. House, on the receipt of your letter", and assured him, "We shall entirely approve it."⁵⁰ To satisfy Dalhousie, Wood further said, "You seem, as you say to have fairly done your part as to education, we have, I think, done ours. We approve all you have proposed. You must execute all we have directed."⁵¹

Wood took full advantage of the Despatch, and referred to his "prospects of immortality". He made his statement in the Commons on 8 August 1854, and felt proud that "the education scheme was loudly and generally approved." Next day he informed Dalhousie, "we were promised that our names should be handed down together as renovators of India."⁵²

Lord Dalhousie set himself in earnest to give the scheme a good start. But he was sorry at the injustice which the Home authorities did towards him. He noted in his diary the following :

"At the close of last year a despatch was sent to the

⁴⁹ *W.P., L.B.*, pp. 244-46, Wood to Dalhousie, 24 July 1854.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 August 1854.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

Court proposing the immediate extension of Mr. Thomason's system of Vernacular Education to all the districts in the North West Provinces. At the same time a similar educational system was proposed for the Punjab, and for the whole of the Lower Provinces. The Court have never up to this time thought proper even to acknowledge this despatch, and in the mean time they have sent out a mission, laying down a complete scheme of general education for all India; in which they not only do not enquire what the Government of India has effected, but actually represent what they have done as still left undone. The plan is a great one; and so far as it can be now worked out I will do it willingly and cordially. But it is impossible not to feel that we have been treated scurvily by the Home authorities."⁵³

His feeling towards Charles Wood was more bitter. "This Education despatch, as well as that on Public Works, is a mere clap-trap put forth to the House of Commons by Sir Charles Wood; whereby he seeks to filch for himself the whole credit of all that has been, or is to be, done; thus unduly detracting from the credit which fairly belongs to the Government of India and to the local administration."⁵⁴ About Charles Wood's speech in the House of Commons, he wrote to his friend Couper,

"You notice Sir C. Wood's speech on India. It is the man. I, I, I, is the whole motive and object, the beginning, and middle, and end of all. In that speech, and in the despatches he has laid before Parliament on Public Works and Education, he has shown the shabbiest injustice to the Government of India. . . . We are one and

⁵³ *Diary of Dalhousie*, 1854, 12 October 1854.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

all disgusted here, as everybody who knows the circumstances must be. I say this to you, but to nobody else. I want no panegyric—I want only our due, which even the devil is admitted to have a right to.”⁵⁵

Dalhousie did not bear injustice without a protest and expressed his regret to the Court of Directors that “the language of the despatch in which their intention has been made known is calculated to lead the world to infer an inactivity on the part of the Government of India in the promotion of general education, with which it is not justly chargeable.”⁵⁶ The Hon’ble Court had expressed in their Despatch that “the attention of the Government of Bengal should be seriously directed to the consideration of some plan for the encouragement of indigenous schools, and for the education of the lower classes”, and that the Court would be “prepared to sanction the general extension of some such system” as Thomason had experimentally introduced “to the other districts of the Agra Presidency” etc. The Governor-General pointed out with ‘pain’ that such expressions went against his administration and must “have led Parliament and the Public of England to suppose, that nothing had of late been done by the Government of India towards those two great ends”; and challenged the Court with facts of what he had already done.⁵⁷ But at the same time he assured them of his cordial co-operation in endeavouring to effect the great object in hand.

A large number of private and official letters* in the

⁵⁵ *P.L.*, p. 324.

⁵⁶ *D.P.*, Governor-General’s Minutes, vol. xix, 19 October 1854.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

* Among many such letters, the following few are worth noting: Letter to Halliday, 29 August 1854; Letter to Halliday, 1 September 1854; Letter to Wood, 18 September 1854; Letter to Wood, 4 October 1854; Letter to Colville, 17 October 1854; Letter to Halliday, 18 October

Dalhousie Collection give evidence of what the Governor-General did in working out the beginnings of the new educational scheme. The Despatch promised, in his words, more troubles the more he thought of it; but yet he was determined to give his best energies to its execution. He engaged himself in conference with those best capable of advising him in India. At times he requested others for help, not officially or formally, but really in personal aid of himself. Among others, he mostly required the help of F. J. Halliday, J. P. Grant, and James Colville, all of whom gave their ungrudging help. "It will be a tough job and will have the cordial exertions of us all", informed Dalhousie to Sir Charles Wood.⁵⁸ To the directors he said, "So soon as the despatch... was received, I took the necessary preliminary steps for giving effect to the instructions which it contained."⁵⁹

In England Sir Charles Wood opined, "I hope to have laid the foundation of a great improvement in the condition of the natives of our Indian territories".⁶⁰ But he knew, as he said, "There is much to fill up in the details, and much, if not all, depends upon the manner in which it is carried out by persons on the spot...."⁶¹ He had told Dalhousie, "...I am well aware that the scheme can only succeed by being taken up and carried into execution heartily by yourself and the governors on

1854; Letter to Grant, 18 October 1854; Letter to Wood, 7 November 1854; and Letter to Wood, 8 February 1855.

Dalhousie summarised his attempts to work out the Despatch in his minutes dated 19 October 1854; 30 December 1854; 2 January 1855, and 28 February 1856.

⁵⁸ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 7 November 1854.

⁵⁹ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xix, 19 October 1854.

⁶⁰ *W.P.*, *L.B.*, vol. vi, p. 119, Wood to Colville, 24 October 1854.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

the spot."⁶² When he heard that Dalhousie had busied himself with the work, he congratulated saying, "Thanks for all the exertions which you are making on Education. I am well aware that to carry out any such scheme great labour must be imposed upon you all, and great difficulties must be encountered, but the object is great, the good to be attained of first rate importance, and I have great confidence in your putting it into practical shape before long."⁶³

It is not the purpose here to describe all aspects of the education scheme and all that was done by the authorities in India to implement them. About vernacular education, the Despatch opened a vast possibility, and Dalhousie, before he left India, saw the beginning of the government organisation of that scheme.

One thing may be pointed out here about Wood's sentiment towards the subject. While the Despatch was in the making, suggestions were received in favour of a free elementary education. Wood took into consideration the conditions prevailing in England, and believed that "the payment (of school fees) induces a more regular attendance and greater exertion on the part of the pupils", and decided to levy a school fee on pupils in India. Herbert Edwardes doubted the wisdom of such an idea and said,

"In India the children love school. Irregular attendance is unknown and only occurs when their friends employ them at home. It is the fear of losing their services which among the rural population is the chief impediment to children attending school and it is not probable that parents and others would consent to incur

⁶² *W.P., L.B.*, vol. vi, pp. 55-57.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 259-61, Wood to Dalhousie, 23 December 1854.

the additional loss which paying a fee however small for the education of their children would in their opinion involve."⁶⁴

This was a very practical suggestion in view of the acute poverty of the Indian people. But Wood did not take into consideration this suggestion. After the Despatch was received in India, Lord Harris, the Governor of Madras, advocated "strongly against requiring any fees in the smaller schools at any rate."⁶⁵ Yet, Wood was, according to him, "anxious however to establish this principle". Apparently, he judged India through the standard of England. Moreover, he did not favour much expenditure on the item of education. About the innumerable village schools he was at a loss to think since long how to "embark on so gigantic an undertaking as rendering assistance" to them;⁶⁶ and about the university education he made it clear that "to pay a man, who can afford to pay for himself, making the payment the inducement to the man to qualify himself... seems to be very contrary to all civilised notions."⁶⁷

Of course, as regards the university education, Wood's principle of "self relying system", had its justification. But the same cannot be said to have carried an equal justification in the case of elementary education. William Adam had pointed out long before that the people were "too ignorant to understand the evils of ignorance, and too poor, even if they did, to be able to remove them." But guided by financial considerations Wood established the principle of charging fees from the

⁶⁴ *W.P., I.B.P.*, Stages of Education Draft, Draft from E. I. House (Suggestions in blue and red ink).

⁶⁵ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. vi, p. 185, *Vide* Wood to Halliday, 8 November 1854.

⁶⁶ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. iv, p. 1.

⁶⁷ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. v, pp. 210-16.

children, and provided in the Despatch that government aid "as a general principle, be made to such schools only as require some fee, however small, from their scholars."⁶⁸ He calculated that "school fees themselves, insignificant as they may be in each individual instance, will in the aggregate, when applied to the support of a better class of masters, become of very considerable importance . . ." When protest was made from India, Wood said, ". . . we shall need all the pecuniary means we can scrape together if the system is to become generally spread."⁶⁹

On this issue Lord Dalhousie's view was rather broader. While recommending in favour of the elementary education in the Punjab, he had expressed his sentiment thus :

"If India were poor and were every day becoming poorer, it would still be our duty and our interest to incur this charge. But India is rich and is every year becoming richer. Wherefore I feel confident that the Hon'ble Court will not hesitate for a moment in giving its sanction to the charge, which is necessary for the establishment of an effective system of Vernacular Education throughout the Punjab."⁷⁰

When the Despatch was on its way to India, Dalhousie suggested to Wood,

"Additional expenditure is every year, every month, increasing. The policy of the Government, the interest of the people, the cry of the day, all are forcing on a very large additional annual expenditure on public works. You will be disappointed if you suppose that all that, or even most of it, will be remunerative to the Exchequer.

⁶⁸ *Education Despatch*, para 54

⁶⁹ *W.P., L.B.*, vol. vi, p. 185, 8 November 1854.

⁷⁰ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xvii, 6 June 1854.

At all events many years must elapse before it can be so.

"Education will form another large item of new expense. . . Our want can only be supplied by reductions, and reductions to be effectual must be on a large scale. Such reductions are to be made only on the military establishments."⁷¹

About financing the scholars for higher education Dalhousie's attitude was liberal. Though Charles Wood made it explicitly clear that people should not be paid by government for higher education, yet Dalhousie recommended, "... there are undoubtedly many cases in which poor but very promising students are only enabled by these scholarships to prosecute their studies to completion, and to deprive such persons of this advantage would probably inflict great discouragement on the cause of Education."⁷² This was a bold statement of the Governor-General against the wishes of the President, but it speaks of his mind as well as shows a more practical approach.

A brief account may be given here of what was done in spreading general education during the remaining years of Dalhousie's administration. He always felt that the work had been begun by his government before the Education Despatch came, and therefore, must be carried on according to the original scheme. "The despatch urges upon the notice of Government, the necessity of adopting a plan for the encouragement of Vernacular Education in Bengal and the other Presidencies such as has been so successful in the North Western Provinces. This subject had however been previously taken up in consequence of a Minute by the Governor-General",

⁷¹ D.P., Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 15 August 1854.

⁷² D.P., Governor-General's Minutes, xol. xix, 30 December 1854.

said Dalhousie.⁷³ He authorised the governments of Bombay and Madras to carry out his instructions with necessary modifications as required by the Court's Despatch, and began to work out the system in Bengal under his own guidance. The Despatch had provided for the establishment of Departments of Education, and this was one of the works Dalhousie attempted first.

"I think that in each Governorship and Lieutenant Governorship an officer should be appointed, who should be termed the Director of Public Instruction whose duty it should be to superintend the Department of Education", declared the Governor-General.⁷⁴

At the instance of the Governor-General, much of the Bengal system was worked out by the new Lieutenant Governor, Frederick James Halliday.* He was influenced by the Thomasonian system and began to experiment it in a few districts of Bengal. Pandit Ishwar Chandra was selected by him "to set the new system going and to keep it going right." It was felt that the former's knowledge of the language of his own countrymen, and of the feeling and habits of rural communities must be far greater than that possessed by a European Officer. Moreover, it was said of him that "His acquirements both in the old learning of the country, and in modern and European learning are considerable; and it has been his special object to train up young men with some tincture of both kinds of learning with the view of furnishing vernacular teachers of a higher order."⁷⁵ It was decided that Pandit Ishwar Chandra should be assigned a

⁷³ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, xol. xix, 30 December 1854.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

* Halliday took over the new office on 28 April 1854, and since then gave anxious consideration to the subject of education.

⁷⁵ *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 13, Note by J. Colville, 20 August 1854.

prominent part in determining the school books to be read, and the course of instruction.

Halliday saw in Bengal a vast number of indigenous schools. After careful enquiry he was assured that those schools were universally in a very low and unsatisfactory condition, the office of the school master having in almost all cases devolved upon persons very unfit for the business.⁷⁶ The first duty of the government, therefore, became to improve those schools as far as possible by establishing a system of model schools as an example to the indigenous schools. A regular plan of visit was also introduced in order that the indigenous school masters might gradually be stimulated to improve up to the models set before them. About the inefficiency of the old fashioned school masters, Vidyasagar himself said,

“The Pathshalas, or indigenous schools, under *Goo-roomahashoys* (village school masters as they were respectfully called in Bengal), such as they are now, are very worthless institutions. Being in the hands of teachers, generally incompetent for the task they undertake, these schools require much improvement.”⁷⁷

To give an immediate effect to the determination of the Governor-General, Halliday decided that Bihar should be placed under a system similar to that introduced by Thomason; and that certain zillahs of Bengal should be placed under the charge of Pandit Ishwar Chandra. He also proposed that the grants-in-aid should be given to private schools.

In the Council of Education, an objection was raised against the appointment of Pandit Ishwar Chandra

⁷⁶ *L.H.C.*, Letter from Hodgson Pratt, 16 November 1854.

⁷⁷ *Selections from Records of Bengal Govt.*, no. xxii, 1855, Note by Pandit Ishwar Chandra.

Vidyasagar as the superintendent of vernacular education. The objection came especially from the two Indian members of the Council, Babu Ram Gopal Ghosh and Babu Ram Prasad Roy. The former said,

“Although I have a very high opinion of the zeal and ability of the Principal of the Sanskrit College, I am scarcely prepared to place the control of Vernacular Education in his hands, so long as he has other responsible duties to attend to.”⁷⁸

Babu Ram Prosad Roy, supported by his colleague, advocated that “European supervision is absolutely necessary, and that this supervision will be far better exercised by a qualified person from the civil service.”⁷⁹ Both wanted a steady and influential superintendence, because, as they pointed out, in the locality of the schools everything was left to the teachers who had to teach the boys, to regulate their studies, to superintend the schools and to maintain a position in their respective circles, with a view to impart importance to the study in the eyes of the people, but being men of very indifferent education themselves, paid on a scale of salary quite disproportionate to the position of a teacher, and left uncontrolled and unassisted, they signally failed in every point of their avocations.⁸⁰

Lord Dalhousie believed that the success of a system of general education greatly depended on an efficient supervision, and the Court of Directors, too, authorised the Government of India to settle the machinery for managing the department. The Governor-General therefore, decided to give authority to the Governments of Bengal and the North Western Provinces to appoint

⁷⁸ *Selec. from Records of Bengal Govt.*, Note by R. G. Ghosh, 11.7.1854.

⁷⁹ *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 13, Note by Ram Prosad Roy, 1 August 1854.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

severally an officer to superintend the Department of Education and a sufficient staff of inspectors and clerks.⁸¹ In case of Bengal, he saw that the superintendence of the principal (Ishwar Chandra) was objected to by many, and the control of a civil servant preferred. But Dalhousie said, "I presume, however, that he (the principal) may very beneficially be appointed an Inspector, and that the one visit a year which the scheme proposes he should pay to the vernacular schools would not interfere injuriously with the discharge of his duties in the Sanskrit College."⁸² In a minute dated 2 January 1855, Lord Dalhousie gave his approval to the scheme proposed by Halliday, subject to the modifications required by the Despatch, to be worked out in the districts of Bihar and Bengal. For the time being it was to be worked only in certain districts of Bengal and not in all the districts. After the preliminary course of action to be adopted was decided, Dalhousie said to Wood,

"The Education Scheme is, I think, now fairly launched, as far as the Supreme Government can do it, and the subordinate governments will work out the details quickly and with good will....I have no doubt that, if I live, I shall see the whole organised and in complete operation (so far as this can be effected at once) before I leave India."⁸³

Everywhere in general, and in Bengal in particular, the government was found to have been diligently employed in carrying out the broad scheme of national instruction. By May 1855 the Bengal Government had appointed a Director of Public Instruction, and four

⁸¹ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xix, 30 December 1854.

⁸² *Ibid.*, vol. xx, 2 January 1855.

⁸³ *D.P.*, no. 219, Supplementary Letters to Board of Control, Dalhousie to Wood, 8 February 1855.

Inspectors, and was gradually filling up the posts of Sub-Inspectors. It was expected, as soon as the staff of officers had been completed, it would proceed to organise the army of schools they were intended to direct. The Despatch was said to have "brought more renown to the Board of Control than any other measure ever adopted by it", and the authorities in India were expected to carry it out "in a spirit of animation suited to the greatness of the design."⁸⁴

In rural areas the existing indigenous schools were formed into sets or circles and to each circle was attached a qualified teacher who was paid by government and who went about from one school to another instructing the *gooroomohashoys* in their duty and the more advanced boys of each school in the higher subjects of instruction. Rewards were bestowed on the teachers and the boys half yearly, in proportion to achievement and progress exhibited.⁸⁵ The governments in the other presidencies proceeded with zeal. "I am very anxious to see the educational scheme afloat as soon as possible, or we shall be behind the rest of India", said John Lawrence in the Punjab.⁸⁶

Though great results could not have been expected before Dalhousie's departure, yet it can be said that the progress of education under the auspices of the several local governments which were seen to be "languid and inconsiderable", received a new impulse. Before he had left India, a distinct department for the superintendence of education had been constituted. A Director of Public Instruction had been appointed by each Governor and Lieutenant-Governor, and in the Punjab; and suitable aid

⁸⁴ *F.I.*, 10 May 1855.

⁸⁵ *S.E.R.*, Part II, p. 104, Extract from Bengal Report for 1855-56.

⁸⁶ *L.P.*, no. 2, p. 206, Lawrence to Courteney, 9 January 1856.

by Inspectors and others had been allotted to each of them. Also, provisional rules for regulating grants-in-aid had been sanctioned for the guidance of the several local governments.⁸⁷ These measures went a long way to starting a new phase in the history of Indian education.

The introduction of the scheme of general education was followed by far-reaching consequences. The education of the people before this period had no scientific foundation. The subjects of study differed from place to place, and they were far from being modern. The Thomasonian system attempted at bringing useful lessons within the reach of the people. The teaching of such subjects as history, geography, or geometry in innumerable village schools began from this time. This brought new and more useful ideas to the young mind.

Without government encouragement in the past, the education of the people could neither progress, nor take a unified shape. The Despatch of 1854 recognised for the first time the responsibility of the government to educate the people, and adopted a uniform scheme for whole India. Once the foundation of an education policy was laid, its development followed in the course of time. Thus while the subsequent governments carried out measures to promote education, its spread among the people, though very slow and limited, brought about a new self-consciousness.

⁸⁷ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 15, Dalhousie's Final Minute, 28 February 1856.

CHAPTER VIII

Bethune, Dalhousie and the Encouragement of Female Education.

“The successful commencement of female education among the children of respectable Hindoos” was, according to Lord Dalhousie, “the beginning of a great revolution in Indian habits.”¹ This ‘great work’ was begun by John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune and was supported by the Marquis of Dalhousie. It is doubtful if Sir Charles Wood’s Education Despatch of 1854 would have at all recommended in favour of female education, had not the ground been prepared by Drinkwater Bethune. But among many writers on modern Indian education, few have done justice to his work. The object of this chapter is neither to show the early missionary activities for promoting female education, nor to refer to later government policy after 1854, but to describe the role played by Drinkwater Bethune in introducing it “on the same plan as male education”,² and the circumstances leading to its acceptance by the Home authorities.

J. E. D. Bethune was born in 1801. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and joined the bar in 1827. He was employed by Lord Grey’s Government shortly after its accession to office on several important commissions, and subsequently as counsel to the Home Office, which appointment he retained for nearly fourteen years. In 1848 Bethune was appointed the

¹ P.L., pp. 121-22, Dalhousie to Couper, 16 April 1850.

² Add. MSS. 36, 477, f. 192.

fourth ordinary, or legislative member of the Supreme Council of India. He was a nominee of Lord John Russell and Sir John Hobhouse, and according to the estimate of the latter, was "a gentleman of attainments universally acknowledged, and as much esteemed in private as in public life."³ When the appointment was intimated to Bethune, he did not seem to have shown any anxiety for the office, and his delay in intimating 'yes' or 'no' was taken by Hobhouse to be extremely unfortunate. The appointment was made concurrently by the Court of Directors and the Board of Control; and when the President, Hobhouse, proposed Bethune's name he did not know that taking advantage of Bethune's delay in sending reply, the Court would propose another candidate upon the President for the same office.⁴ The President however prevailed upon Bethune and the latter agreed to the job. A glimpse into Bethune's character shows that being essentially good and humane he could not be swayed by the temptation of a high Indian office unless his mother had agreed him go. The President noted in his personal diary :

"Mr. Bethune came down to me on Tuesday and dined. He came to say that he accepted the office of Legislative Councillor and had delayed his answer only to get the consent of his mother, an old lady of 82. I told him the delay might create difficulties but I would do my best to get him the appointment. Mr. Bethune is a very agreeable man and knows very well what he is about."⁵

On his arrival in India Bethune was received by the

³ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 845, f. 332, Hobhouse to Tucker, 9 Nov. 1847.

⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 334, Hobhouse to Bethune, 7 November 1847.

⁵ *Add. MSS.* 43, 751, Diary of Broughton, vol. 8, f. 50, 11 Nov. 1847.

Governor-General 'most kindly', and Bethune felt confident that he would be "on the best possible understanding with him" during his stay here. Bethune saw that Dalhousie who had only arrived a few months earlier seemed to be already very popular both in the offices and with the general society of Calcutta. Everything appeared to Bethune well and he said, "I am beginning to open my eyes in my new world, and to find that it is not so wholly unlike the old one as I expected."⁶

Hobhouse had selected Bethune for the office of the legislative councillor to accomplish some of the objects which he had in view. While in England, Bethune had been "confidentially consulted by the Governments of Lord Melbourne, and Sir Robert Peel, and Lord John Russell in devising the Acts of Parliament introduced by Ministers on the most important subjects of legislation."⁷ The President wanted Bethune to utilise his legislative talent to improve Indian matters. Accordingly, after he had received the agreeable intelligence of Bethune's safe arrival at Calcutta, Hobhouse reminded him of the purpose for which he had been sent and wrote,

"It would be a feather in more caps than one if you were to cut the Macaulay Code into laws, and perhaps you might not find the task so difficult as at first sight it might appear to be. I trust the Bench will co-operate heartily in the good work, and that the Government of India will give all the assistance you may want."⁸

But in the meantime Bethune's talent had already been diverted in another direction by Dalhousie. It was an accident that the Governor-General, immediately on Bethune's arrival, selected him to be the president of the

⁶ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 855, f. 53, Bethune to Hobhouse, 2 May 1848.

⁷ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 845, f. 332.

⁸ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 859, f. 31, President to Bethune, 7 July 1848.

council of education of Bengal. Dalhousie desired to place a member of his Legislative Council at the head of the committee of education in order to give weight and authority to the committee and establish a closer connection between the committee and the government.⁹ The office was additional, unpaid, and very laborious. But when Bethune accepted it at the request of the Governor-General he thought that he took on himself to a certain extent, the character of a minister of public instruction, the only compensation for which was to be found in its importance.¹⁰ In the few years Bethune lived in India, he devoted himself fully to the latter work rather than to the serious business of law-making. Even, Dalhousie, who liked Bethune much, had to complain in course of time that, "He likes schooling better than law-making; and all the Governors-General together since Job Charnock will not make him to stick to the latter occupation."¹¹ This enthusiasm for schooling resulted in the introduction of modern female education in India.

There is no evidence to show that Bethune had entertained any idea of championing female education before his appointment to the council of education. But at the time when he took over the charge of that office, an idea was beginning to develop in favour of educating daughters at least among a small section of the people. The credit goes to an enlightened Bengali gentleman of Uttarpara, Babu Jaykissen Mookerjee, who thought of establishing a school for the education of respectable Hindu girls in Bengali, and desired to place that school under the superintendence of an Indian and a European

⁹ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to various persons in India and Europe, Dalhousie to Colville, 2 May 1848.

¹⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 36, Bethune's Minute, 10 June 1851.

¹¹ *Add. MSS.* 36, 477, f. 286, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 23 October 1850.

instructress. His scheme was submitted to the district collector who immediately held himself in communication with the secretary to the council of education, and procured for the people of that locality a promise of hearty co-operation.¹² Such efforts, though extremely limited in scope, nevertheless represented a new development in Bengal and Bethune began to feel that it was "impossible to avoid seeing that a great revolution of opinion has been for a long time at work, and will doubtless in another generation, for time is requisite, bear good fruit."¹³ A small group of people who wanted progress and were the imitators of Western customs were sneeringly called by the conservative school as "Young Bengal", and to Bethune it seemed that "when Young Bengal has grown to 'Old Bengal', the succeeding generation will meet with fewer obstructions than their fathers did, in the way of freeing their mind from debasing superstitions and degrading customs."¹⁴ Bethune sided with the Young Bengal, or rather, became one of their leaders, and began to experiment with the education of the daughters of the Hindus.

There were already several institutions in Calcutta and elsewhere "for female children of the poorer classes." But those institutions were run by the Christian missionaries. It may be said in their favour that for nearly thirty years before the official recognition of female education, various missionary bodies made noble labours to educate women. The zeal of one Mrs. Wilson, a noble minded and disinterested lady, to raise the character of Indian females through the blessings of education was praiseworthy. But however noble the attempts of the

¹² News in *Probhakar*, March 11, reproduced in Allen's Indian Mail, 2 May 1848.

¹³ *European Tract*, 156, Bethune's correspondence, 1 October 1849.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

missionary societies were, the motive behind their work was to spread Christianity through education, and this was well known to all. The result was that the wealthier members of the community and people of higher classes were never attracted towards the missionary schools. In most of such schools education was given through the medium of vernacular language, but this, too, did not remove prejudices against the missionary purpose. Bethune became convinced of the failure of every attempt to induce respectable people to send their daughters to a missionary school where Christianity was taught.¹⁵ He, therefore, wanted to open an experimental institution not in his official capacity but as a private individual for the Hindu girls of the middle and higher ranks.¹⁶ He aimed at establishing his school on the same principle, of excluding from it all religious teaching as in the government schools for boys. But, though was himself at the helm of educational affairs in Bengal, he did not ask for government sanction for his school because that should have led to "endless references and interminable delays." Moreover, Bethune was himself doubtful of success, and, therefore, he wished the discredit of failure to rest with himself alone."¹⁷

When Bethune's views became known, some of the respectable Hindus came to his support immediately. Babu Ram Gopal Ghosh, a well known merchant of Calcutta, became in words of Bethune, his principal adviser and procured for him his first pupils. Babu Dakhina Ranjan Mookerjee, a zamindar, promised the free gift of a site for the school, or five bighas of land valued at 10,000 rupees, in one quarter of the town.

¹⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Bethune's Letter, 29 March 1850.

¹⁶ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 29 June 1849.

¹⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Bethune's Letter, 29 March 1850.

Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, one of the pandits of the Sanskrit College, not only liked to send his daughters to the school, but agreed to attend it daily to give gratuitous instruction to the children in Bengali, and to compile series of elementary books for their use.¹⁸

With the help of such a "bold little band of reformers" Bethune prepared to open his school. Dalhousie who was informed of Bethune's intention and activities could not believe at this stage that he would succeed. "You ought to be content with a mere 'make believe', as the children say, of education in the case of Bengalee females", said the Governor-General, "and be grateful that you can gain so much to begin with". But on his behalf, he assured Bethune,

"I shall be glad if I can aid by means of Rupees that universal 'Concrete' on which the foundations of everything in India rest."¹⁹

Bethune in the meantime had annoyed Hobhouse greatly in his other spheres of activity. He had issued minutes on the Marine Mutiny Act, in which, according to the President, he was "wrong in all his points; but if he was right his language would be inexcusable."²⁰ The authorities at Home felt it inconceivable that any one in his station should have written such minutes as he worded on the subject. In the education board, too, Hobhouse thought Bethune to be wrong in his work. Sir Edward Ryan and Mr. Cameron called upon the President with some consternation in consequence of having heard that Bethune differed with his colleagues at the education

¹⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Bethune's Letter, 29 March 1850.

¹⁹ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. i, Dalhousie to Bethune, 11 January 1849.

²⁰ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 859, f. 43, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 24 August 1848.

board, and, on being in a minority of one, declined taking part in the examinations. The opinion, as alleged to be adopted by Bethune, in regard to "the Missionaries' pupils being allowed to reckon their proficiency in Christian instruction in competition with the secular acquirements of other students," was thought to be manifestly at variance with the spirit of the Indian Government. The President was angry to gather such news about Bethune and without waiting for official intelligence began to express strongest feeling against him. He complained to Dalhousie, "It is a pity that he has started so unluckily, but I trust he will mend as he goes on."²¹

The Governor-General's attitude was favourable towards his colleague, and he said to Hobhouse, "Nothing of the nature of that which you mentioned ever to my knowledge came before the Government of India. I never heard of any difference of his with the Council of Education. From all I know of his sentiments I should have thought he would have objected to introducing Christianity into Public Education in India, and if he threatened not to attend the examination he must have changed his mind for I know that he did attend and took a great deal of trouble about them."²² As a matter of fact, Hobhouse was misinformed, and Dalhousie had to remove doubts from his mind. He said to Bethune against Hobhouse, "I said nothing to you about Hobhouse's remarks about the Council of Education because I did not wish to annoy you needlessly I trust he will make a fitting apology to you."²³ Hobhouse as the President of the Board of Control was, however, not in a

²¹ *Ibid.*, f. 48, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 1 September 1848.

²² *Add. Mss.* 36, 476, fos. 277-8, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 20 November 1848.

²³ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. i, Dalhousie to Bethune, 11 January 1849.

position to feel sorry for the charges he had brought against a subordinate servant and a good man like Bethune for no fault of the latter. He cleverly set aside his charges on educational affairs but still persisted in rebuking Bethune, who was told, "I shall only therefore say that I trust for the future there will be no pretext for any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of any of your sayings and doings."²⁴ The Governor-General was told, "Bethune has explained his conduct in regard to the Council of Education. There was not much to find fault with; but what he cannot explain is the extreme impropriety of the tone assumed in his minute respecting the mutiny act."²⁵ From this time onward the President never changed his opinion about Bethune; at times he rather took a hostile attitude; and whenever an occasion came he was prepared to enjoy joke at the cost of Bethune.

The displeasure of the authorities at Home does not seem to have much disturbed Bethune. Unconcerned with official developments, he seriously busied himself with matters relating to female education. On 7 May 1849, Bethune opened his female school in Calcutta. Those who observed the function regarded it as an event of considerable interest. Acting in concert with several public spirited and intelligent local gentlemen, he, in the short time of a fortnight, had completed all the preliminary arrangements. The school was opened with 21 pupils of from 6 to 9 years of age, under the superintendence of an English lady, assisted by a pandit.²⁶ In opening the school Bethune declared,

"The time may come, and that at no distant period,

²⁴ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 859, fos. 93-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 97.

²⁶ News of *Hurkaru* reproduced in *Allen's Indian Mail*, 29 June 1849.

when the Calcutta female school, by whatever other and more illustrious name it may then be known,* shall take its proud place among the most honoured, as it will assuredly be one of the most useful institutions of the land."

About the nature of the studies to be pursued, Bethune made it clear to the Hindus of Calcutta that the plan which was uniformly followed in the government schools, of not meddling with the religion of their children, was to be strictly followed. Further, as far as literature was concerned, it was announced that Bengali should be made the foundation, and resort to English would be made only for some of those subsidiary advantages and when it was known that the communication of such knowledge was not in opposition to the wishes of the parents.²⁷ Bethune in his long speech carefully guarded his words. He abstained from any allusion to the exertions which had been made for many years by the missionaries in the cause of female education. His main aim was to impress upon the value of education, especially in case of females, as well as to show that his endeavour to encourage the cause was motivated by nothing but philanthropy.

Yet Bethune's work caused a great excitement and it was vehemently opposed by many of the most influential citizens of Calcutta.²⁸ He had not deemed it necessary to seek the support in the first instance of those who were generally looked on as the leading men of Hindu society, Raja Radha Kanta Deb, Raja Kali Krishna

* During Bethune's life time the school was called the Calcutta Female School though for a time Bethune tried to name it after Queen Victoria. From Bethune's death up till now the institution is famously known as the Bethune School.

²⁷ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 29 June 1849.

²⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Bethune's Letter, 29 March 1850.

Bahadur, and Babu Ashutosh Deb though he intended to call for their support after his works had settled down into something of method and order.²⁹ Chiefly on the ground of mortified vanity because they had not been consulted, and for the reason that they belonged to the older school of thought, some of such prominent people and their supporters set on foot "every kind of annoyance and persecution" to deter the friends of Bethune "from continuing to support the school and with such success that at one time the number of enrolled pupils dwindled to seven".³⁰

But Bethune continued to keep the school open, in the face of the discouraging defection. The past history of education in India had fully prepared him to face such "bigoted opposition", and he gave confidence to the parents and guardians of the pupils as well as to his friends and supporters with the examples of how the "Hindoo College was threatened, at its establishment with turmoils and tumult, and a still louder outcry was raised when for the first time it was proposed in the Medical College that the native students should dissect human beings, instead of dogs and goats," and argued that "the opposition which had been raised to the Female Institution now opened, would eventually subside in the same manner."³¹ Behind Bethune stood the Governor-General to give him encouragement. In June 1849, he said to Bethune,

"I have not been ignorant or unobservant of your proceedings about the Female School; and I regard it even in its present dimensions as a great achievement indeed. What you tell me seems to be full of encourage-

²⁹ *F.I.*, 17 May 1849.

³⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Bethune's Letter, 29 March 1850.

³¹ *F.I.*, 31 May 1849.

ment for you to persevere. I truly believe that you have planted the grain of mustard seed; and that it will one day be a great tree which you and those whom we serve may be proud to look upon."³²

Bethune continued to supply regular information about his school to the Governor-General. He even sent to him necessary documents showing the encouragement and support he received from the people themselves. Dalhousie felt that everything appeared to look as encouragingly as one could expect, and he heartily hoped that the prospect might become brighter every day.³³

For a few months the institution continued to be a prominent subject of discussion, and though suffered some damage, it proved itself likely to weather the storm.³⁴ In course of time some of the leading Hindus withdrew their opposition, and on the other hand, Bethune's idea began to spread. From Bombay, an enlightened Parsee gentleman, Manockjee Cursetjee, assured Bethune of the claim he had "established on the gratitude of every right thinking man" and requested his support to establish female schools in that quarter.³⁵ Bethune promised him his support and financial assistance. Babu Jaykissen Mookerjee, the zamindar of Hooghly district, addressed the council of education on a plan for opening a female school at Uttarpara of which he professed himself ready to pay half the expense if the government would give its sanction and defray the remaining. To test his sincerity, Bethune did not promise his help, but became happy to learn that Jaykissen Mookerjee prepared to open the

³² *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. i, Dalhousie to Bethune, 2 June 1849.

³³ *Ibid.*, 23 June 1849.

³⁴ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 25 July 1849.

³⁵ *European Tract*, 156, Manockjee to Bethune, 3 August 1849.

school at once without any further application to the government.

At Barasat, some of the most respectable inhabitants established a school "attended by more than 20 girls, chiefly Brahmanical caste, and what is very remarkable, two of them being already married". When Bethune offered to bear the expense of building a school house for them, they showed their earnestness by declining Bethune's help and trying to raise sufficient subscriptions among themselves. Similar schools were set on foot at Neeburdhia and Sooksagar, and another near Jessore.³⁶

It must not be supposed, however, that this movement was made without opposition on the part of those of the contrary opinion, on the other hand, wherever a school was established, there was a repetition of the same system of persecution and attempts at intimidation which Bethune had had to contend with in Calcutta. Frequent applications were made to Bethune for support and encouragement, as the position which he assumed naturally marked him out as the patron of all such undertakings.³⁷ Bethune's stand was bold, and despite all opposition, he confidently felt, "I have set the ball rolling, which will never stop now until it reaches the goal."³⁸ Two things encouraged him the most. He had with him the sympathy and good wishes of all the educated part of the community with a few exceptions, and the accounts he received from the mistress of his little school, Mrs. Ridsdale, were most cheering.

"She speaks in the highest terms of the docility of her little pupils and declares that they all show greater

³⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Bethune's Letter, 29 March 1850.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *European Tract*, 156, Bethune's Correspondence, 1 October 1849.

intelligence and aptitude of learning than girls of the same age in England", said Bethune.³⁹

For nearly a year from the founding of his school, Bethune did not ask for any government help or sanction, though privately he kept the Governor-General well informed of his work. John Hobhouse perhaps gathered from the newspapers what Bethune was doing in an unofficial way and did not forget to taunt him, "I hope you have had your health. I see that the newspapers congratulated you on not having altogether laid aside the jovial habits of the learned profession".⁴⁰ About the work of Bethune as a legislative councillor who was then launching his so-called Black-Acts, Hobhouse said, "I . . . am sorry to find that you are in hot water again; or rather that you have not yet got out of it; for it seems to me that you have been more or less in that condition since your arrival in India."

The Governor-General, on the other hand, regarded his school "as one of the greatest works which has yet been commenced in India,"⁴¹ and very gladly asked Lady Dalhousie to go to see it at Bethune's request. "She came back delighted. It had been established only 10 months, there had been great opposition, yet in spite of it all there are now 34 pupils; and 4 or 5 other female schools have been set up in other places near Calcutta. The progress they had made in female work, in reading and writing and even in writing English was very remarkable. An evidence of the latter will be found among my papers being a letter written to Lady Dalhousie by the eldest of them in the name of the rest, in English, and hoping she

³⁹ *European Tract*, 156, Bethune's Correspondence, 1 October 1849.

⁴⁰ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 859, fos. 255-56, President to Bethune, 25 February 1850.

⁴¹ *Diary of Dalhousie*, 1850, part i, from 2 March 1850.

would come and see them before she went away," noted Dalhousie in his diary.⁴²

Lady Dalhousie's visit to Bethune's school was a happy incident for the institution.* Since that time the Governor-General began to consider the question of taking up the female education at par with that of the boys as a government concern.

About a month after, on 29 March 1850, Bethune addressed a letter to the Governor-General requesting for the government favour to his and other female schools. So far, the silence of the government had been misrepresented by the opponents of the movement that the government was not merely indifferent but actually hostile to it. The champions of female education became convinced that that bold misrepresentation would not be without its effect, if some encouragement was not given to those who had put themselves forward in advancing the great work. Bethune was prepared, in order to demonstrate more unquestionably the success of his experiments, to continue for some time longer without endeavouring to enlist the influence of government on the side of the schools. But the above mentioned cause influenced him to call for government assistance without further delay. Moreover, he felt that he was in a position to assure the Governor-General that the government recognition of female education was certainly to carry with it the sympathies of a great body of the people. He apprehended no opposition to the declared wishes of government. "The feelings excited have never been, even at the worst, so violent as on occasion of the establish-

⁴² *Diary of Dalhousie*, 1850, part i, from 2 March 1850.

* The exact date of Lady Dalhousie's visit to Bethune's school is neither to be found in Dalhousie's diary nor in Bethune's letters. But the diary indicates that it was in the later part of February 1850.

ment of the Medical College; and the good to be expected from the full development of the scheme cannot be surpassed by that of any institution in the country", felt Bethune.⁴³

Accordingly, he put before Lord Dalhousie a few proposals. First, that the council of education be informed that it was henceforward to consider its functions as comprising also the superintendence of female education, and that wherever any disposition was shown by the people to establish female schools, it was to give them all possible encouragement and further their plans in every way. Second, it might be right to suggest also to the Government of Bengal that special instructions should be issued to the magistrates calling their attention to the growing disposition among the people to institute female schools, directing them to use all means in their power to make it known that the government viewed the establishment of such schools with great satisfaction, to encourage their promoters in all proper ways, and especially to intimate to those whom they should learn to be active in opposing them that, while the government did not desire forcibly to impose any such institutions on the people in opposition to their own wishes, it would not overlook any attempt to ill-treat or intimidate those who were engaged in furthering a work which the government considered so beneficial. Lastly, as regards his own school,* Bethune requested the Governor-General to exercise influence on the Hon'ble Court of Directors in inducing them to address Her Majesty Queen Victoria

⁴³ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Bethune's Letter, 29 March 1850.

* Bethune did not ask for any financial assistance to his school from the government. He wanted to continue to defray the expense of it as he had hitherto done, and so long as he hoped to remain in India, and said that "When I leave it, I have little doubt of being able to interest others to supply my place."

for leave to call the school by her name, and to consider it as placed especially under her patronage. As Bethune said,

"It will not be one of the least remarkable triumphs in India which will have redounded to the honour of Her Majesty's reign, that in the time of a female sovereign a beginning should be made towards emancipating so many of her female subjects from the degradation and misery which are now their lot."⁴⁴

Bethune's letter to the Governor-General was addressed on 29 March 1850, and Dalhousie issued his minute on female education almost immediately, on 1 April 1850. He recorded his full and unreserved approval of the main object which his colleague had had in view. The success which had been accomplished in so short a time and that, too, by the exertions of a private individual and without the influence of the powers of government gave Dalhousie much satisfaction. "Mr. Bethune has, in my humble opinion", said the Governor-General, "done a great work in the first successful introduction of native female education in India, on a sound and solid foundation; and has earned a right not only to the gratitude of the Government but to its frank and cordial support."⁴⁵ Dalhousie next passed his note to his colleagues in the Council and hoped that if they took the same view, he would request the Court of Directors for approval, and order the council of education to take it up.

Among the Councillors, Sir John H. Littler was not prepared to support the cause of female education. A few days earlier, Bethune had requested him to issue

⁴⁴ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Bethune to Dalhousie, 29 March 1850.

⁴⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. iv, 1 April 1850.

instructions to the magistrate of Barasat and other stations where female schools were established to afford them protection and encouragement. But Littler declined on the grounds that it was not usual for government to interfere in such matters either directly or indirectly. He regretted much that he could not agree in opinion with his Hon'ble Colleague Bethune as to what he thought to be the interference of government in the cause of female education, and declared,

"The scheme of Female Education is doubtless unpopular, and looked upon by the Mass, with fear and dread, whether Hindoos or Mohommedans. Will it not involve a dereliction of the principle of neutrality to which the Government is pledged in like cases?"⁴⁶

The views of Littler were challenged by other members of the Council. Sir F. Currie pointed out that the people throughout the country were quite aware that the government scheme of education was entirely unconnected with missionary and other operations with a view to the introduction of Christianity, and therefore the government support of female education was not to arouse public suspicion.⁴⁷ Hon'ble J. Lowis contradicted Littler that the necessity of absolute ignorance on the part of women was not insisted on as a tenet of his religion by the Hindu, and therefore, he shared in no degree the apprehension with which Sir John viewed the proposed innovation. "In my opinion it is both safe and salutary to make it, and looking at the predominant influence which the mother's training of the child has upon the character of the man, I anticipate from Mr. Bethune's project, large and lasting social benefits."⁴⁸ Both the

⁴⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Minute by J. H. Littler, 2 April 1850.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Minute by F. Currie, 2 April 1850.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Minute by J. Lowis, 3 April 1850.

above members cordially concurred with the Governor-General in the sentiments he had expressed in his minute. Dalhousie himself laughed at the views held by Littler and said to Couper, Littler "thought that a smattering of English would lead them (the girls) to immoral habits—wonderful conclusion, even if the teaching was a smattering of English, which it is not."⁴⁹ On majority siding with the Governor-General, Littler's objection did not stand.

So the Government of India asked the Government of Bengal to inform the council of education that female education henceforth was to be taken up as a government concern. F. J. Halliday was then the secretary to the Government of India. In a long letter dated 11 April 1850, he drew the attention of J. P. Grant, secretary to the Government of Bengal, to several points connected with the subject. He pointed out that thirtyfive years had elapsed since the establishment of the Hindu College gave the first great impulse to the desire for European knowledge. Under the influence of new ideas which had been widely disseminated among large and influential classes of the community through government schools and colleges, it was reasonable to believe that further attempts for improving the social condition of the people might be successfully made which at an earlier period would have failed altogether to produce any satisfactory result.⁵⁰ In fact it was seen that already a certain degree of education was being given to the female relatives of those who could afford the expense of entertaining special instructors at their own houses. Halliday said, "This method of imparting knowledge is impracticable as a general system, but it appears to the Governor-

⁴⁹ *P.L.*, pp. 121-22.

⁵⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Halliday to Grant, 11 April 1850.

General-in-Council that it is quite possible to establish female schools in which precautions may be adopted for as close a seclusion of the girls as the custom of the country may require."⁵¹ The Bengal Government was requested to ask the council of education to accept the superintendence of female education as one of its functions, and, wherever any disposition was shown by the people to establish female schools, to give them all possible encouragement. The Bengal Government was also asked to instruct the chief civil officers of the mofussil directing them to use all means at their disposal for encouraging those institutions.⁵²

The decision of the Governor-General made Bethune happy. He did not wait to see how Sir John Hobhouse would react to the proposal of the Queen's patronage for his school through Dalhousie's letter. So, before Dalhousie had written to the President, Bethune addressed a long letter to him, saying,

"You will see by the public letter that the Directors are asked to solicit the Queen to give her patronage to the Calcutta school, which has been the beginning of the movement. I wish to let you know that through the kindness of Lady John Russell, with whom my sister is very intimate, I have already ascertained privately, that the Queen will probably accede to the request, if it comes home, as it will, sanctioned with the approval of the Governor-General."⁵³

Bethune emphasised before the President how the matter was really of considerable consequence to the social progress of India, and also suggested a plan by which

⁵¹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 28, Halliday to Grant, 11 April 1850.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, fos. 44-8, Bethune to Hobhouse, 22 April 1850.

Her Majesty, if she was so advised, might grant the female schools an additional substantial benefit, without cost to herself, or to her Chancellor of the Exchequer.*

Dalhousie informed Hobhouse about his Government's decision, but did not ask for any financial commitments on behalf of the Home authorities. He was fully conscious of the President's unsympathetic attitude towards Bethune and therefore assured him, "Bethune has been working hard lately and got through a great deal in legislation." About the female school, he said to him,

"The introduction of female education on the same plan as male education has been his work and it does him honour. The Government have taken it up, so far as put (?) female schools under the superintendence of the Council of Education in the same way as boys school, and I believe it to be the successful commencement of a new and wide channel of improvement.

"He is anxious to obtain the Queen's consent, through the Court of Directors, to become Patroness of the first founded school. He told me he was going to write to you on the subject and asked me to say to you that there are no objections. I see no objection here, on the contrary, it will do good."⁵⁴

The Governor-General also informed the Court of Directors that Bethune had some correspondence "in other quarters" to secure the Queen's name for his school, and as for himself, he said, "I mention it only to express my hope that the Court will not see any objections. I believe it to be a great work begun, and I desire

* See Appendix G.

⁵⁴ *Add. Mss.*, 36, 477, fos. 192-3, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 23 April 1850.

to second it with all my aid.”⁵⁵ Bethune was very much hopeful of favour from Home authorities. On 3 May 1850, he once again wrote to the President, “I feel sure that the subject will recommend itself to your favour, without any argument on my part, beyond assuring you that, according to the best information I have been able to get, the country is ripe for this step, and that it would be a discouragement to the cause of progress to delay it longer.”⁵⁶

But Sir John Hobhouse had almost been tired, according to him, with “regard to the working, or rather, non-working”, of the legislative councillor on legislative matters. “He has much disappointed me; and gives as much vexation by what he does as by what he omits to do. . . If he was not a well conditioned, amiable gentleman, I could find it in my heart to send for him home”, thought Sir John.⁵⁷ At this time, when he received Bethune’s letter about his approach to the Queen through Lady John Russell, Hobhouse got angry and wrote back,

“As to your female education scheme, I think you will find yourself embarrassed by seeking for royal patronage through any other channel than the President of this Board; and I am much mistaken if Lord John Russell age through any other channel than the President of this Board; and I am much mistaken if Lord John Russell approves of such an unusual course. The Court of Directors have no means of communicating with the Queen except through the head of this office.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Shephard, 23 April 1850.

⁵⁶ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, f. 49.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 859, f 284, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 24 May 1850.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 297, Hobhouse to Bethune, 24 June 1850.

To Bethune, such a cold reply from the President came like a shock. He had raised high hopes to name his school after Victoria, and already in Calcutta there were people to call the school as Victoria female school. But the President's letter indicated that the authorities were unwilling to sanction the Queen's name. Yet in hope, Bethune wrote,

"I must have expressed myself very ill, if I led you to think that I contemplated applying for the Queen's patronage otherwise than through you. Innocent as I am of much knowledge of official forms, I was well aware that it could be only through you that such a request could be granted, but before making it in proper form, I thought that it would be prudent to endeavour to ascertain unofficially whether or not such a request, if made, had any chance of being favourably received. And this I tried to do through Lady John Russell, who is an intimate friend of my sister's, and who, I believe, consented to speak to one of the ladies in waiting, after consultation with Lord John. If I have done anything irregular in this, I trust you will attribute it solely to my excessive anxiety on the subject, and not allow the cause to suffer by the mistake of it's advocate."⁵⁹

Bethune's school continued to flourish. By August 1850, Bethune set aside 30,000 rupees to build a school house on a ground which he had obtained from the Government of Bengal in a central part of Calcutta. He had also planned to establish a training school for female teachers, because, he felt it a great difficulty, as he said, "to find educated women who can speak Bengalee, who have zeal in the cause, without thinking it sinful not to try to convert the children, that is to say, to empty the

⁵⁹ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, fos. 124-30, Bethune to President, 8.8.1850.

school forthwith.”⁶⁰ The expenses which Bethune made were from his own income. He was said to have possessed considerable property at home, and seemed to have come to India without any design to increase it, and it was said that he spent the whole of his official income while in India, and spent it in great part on objects unconnected with self.⁶¹ His school is stated to have cost him Rs. 700 a month which he defrayed from his own pocket.⁶²

His zeal for the cause was no less remarkable. In one village, 70 miles from Calcutta, he was obliged to bribe a Brahmin to cook for the mother of the pandit who attended the school. In another, he bought off the furious zeal of a high-principled opponent, by helping him to dig a tank.⁶³

The example which Bethune put forward from his high position, inspired the educated people not only in Bengal, but at other places too, especially in Bombay. At Bombay, three schools were established for the instruction of Hindu females, with a regular aggregate attendance of no fewer than 154 pupils by the middle of 1850. Most of the pupils were in their early youth, or even childhood, but all of whom were wives.⁶⁴ Of these early female schools in Bombay, one was at the Palwa road at which the attendance numbered 30; the second was at Loharchale where the pupils numbered 63; and the third was at Kamartookada, where there were 61 pupils. The teachers of these schools conducted the little girls to and

⁶⁰ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, fos. 124-30, Bethune to President, 8.8.1850.

⁶¹ *Calcutta Review*, 1855, vol. xxv, *vide* article on Native Female Education constructed from writings of Alexander Duff and Edward Storrow.

⁶² *F.I.*, 21 August 1851.

⁶³ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, fos. 124-30.

⁶⁴ *Indian News*, 1 August 1850.

from their houses to the schools, which "species of procession" formed "a novel and even affecting spectacle to a reflective mind". The movement in Bombay was mainly championed by the students of the Elphinstone Institute who styled themselves as the Youngmen's Literary Society, and though forming rather a very different agency, worked for similar objects—as of Bethune. By later half of 1850, seven schools for female education had been established in Bombay, affording instruction to no less than two hundred and seventy pupils. In the city of Ahmedabad, a merchant named Muggunabhoy Karamchand established a female school and received the title of Rao Bahadur from the government.⁶⁵ In Bengal the schools worked well. Some of these schools were visited by Bethune who presented them with maps, pictures, books etc. The animosity on the part of the bigoted portion of the community was met with by the legal persecution as recommended by the government. At Barasat, about 12 miles from Calcutta, the agitation was violent. The members of the female school committee were assailed in the streets with the foulest language, and every kind of annoyance that vindictiveness could suggest, was brought to bear against them. But the magistrate, Hodgson Pratt, enquired himself into each charge, and took legal steps. Such action on part of the government gradually rooted out the opposition.⁶⁶

On the other hand, the spirit in its favour was obviously on the increase. A group of educated people sent their declaration from Barasat to Bethune, saying:

"Since it is one of the most important duties of man to seek to promote the welfare of the society in which he

⁶⁵ *F.I.*, 14 November 1850.

⁶⁶ *Calcutta Review*, 1855, vol. xxv, Article on Native Female Education.

lives, and since nothing appears to be so well calculated to attain this end as imparting instruction to all its members, we, the undersigned, take upon ourselves the task of educating the female children of this district. If, for this, we are persecuted in the greatest degree, such as being excommunicated from Hindu Society,—we will not, on any account, desist from our endeavours to advance the cause.”⁶⁷

The people who sent this declaration to Bethune were themselves orthodox Hindus. There was not a single man among them who would not keep himself aloof from the missionaries. Sending a copy of their declaration to Hobhouse, Bethune asked him, “How much better does this declaration deserve it, and can you wonder at my being an enthusiast in this cause, with men such as these to help me on?” He further reminded the President that “there are undeniable proofs that a spirit is awaking among the people which it would be shameful not to encourage.”⁶⁸

But Hobhouse was in no mood to forgive Bethune. He wrote to Dalhousie, “You must make him attend to his duties, and abstain from speculative law-making—as also from recommending that the Queen should be asked to patronise his notions however praiseworthy they may be. It seems he has some mode of communicating with Lady John Russell, which may lead him into irregularities.”⁶⁹ To Bethune the President said,

“You must, I think, on reflexion, admit that to employ the services of a Lady in Waiting, for purposes of Government, is somewhat more suitable to the days

⁶⁷ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, fos. 124-30.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 7 September 1850.

of Mrs. Masham than to the present time, and I feel sure that the same reflexion will convince you that any interference of that kind is much more likely to embarrass than to forward your projects."⁷⁰

He disappointed Bethune with the information that the Court of Directors did not think it expedient to call in the Queen to patronise his school, and that he himself entirely agreed with the Court. With this information Hobhouse taunted, "I hope you have your health in spite of all disappointments."⁷¹

Against such an attitude of the President, Bethune gave a reply,

"I hope I kiss the rod with as much affectionate reverence as the sensibility of human flesh allows. In your last (letter) you taunt me with going back to the practices of Mrs. Masham days; and I believe I have already twice apologised for an error into which I was led by my extreme anxiety on the subject. I submit, because I must, to your decision : but I think you undervalue the importance of the agitation that I have begun on this subject of female education, and the immense assistance that any open declaration of favour from home would give me."⁷²

The foundation stone of the proposed Bethune school was laid by Hon'ble Sir John Littler, the deputy governor of Bengal, on Tuesday the 6th November 1850.⁷³ It may be recollected that Littler had earlier opposed the plan of female education, and he still, according to Bethune, was

⁷⁰ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 859, fos. 229-30, President to Bethune, 6 October 1850.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, fos. 189-92, Bethune to President, 23 November 1850.

⁷³ *F.I.*, 14 November 1850.

inclined to look on it all as humbug. But Lord Dalhousie who was as favourable to Bethune as he could ask for, was at that time far away.⁷⁴ The ceremony was attended by the Bishop of Calcutta, and a great number of government officers, and a numerous assemblage of Hindu gentlemen. Bethune made a speech. He alluded in strong and feeling terms to the conduct of Babu Dakhinaranjan Mookerjee for his unasked assistance. He made a free gift to Bethune of sufficient land to serve as a site for the building. Bethune declared in his speech that "this generation would not pass away without witnessing a marked and happy progress in this matter of female education, and a decided elevation in the position of the women of this land in the scale of social existence."⁷⁵

John Hobhouse who continued to be "exceedingly disappointed" in Bethune, got the reports of the above mentioned function, and said to Dalhousie, "Your Legislative Councillor or some one for him, has sent me the *Calcutta Morning Chronicle*, which contains a speech of most prodigious length delivered by said Councillor on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the Hindoo female school; or as he calls it, 'planting the tender saplin' of etc. These are innocent amusements, and I am glad he takes delight in them; but I hope he will not send his speech to the Queen or Lady John Russell."⁷⁶ To Hobhouse much of the work which Bethune did were like "carving out idols for himself to play with and others to laugh at."

Bethune's attitude at this time to bring about some

⁷⁴ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, fos. 189-92.

⁷⁵ *F.I.*, 14 November 1850

⁷⁶ *Home Misc: B.P.*, Vol. 859, f. 353, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 23 Decembbber 1850.

reforms in the Hindu society through legislation further displeased the President. It seems that the legislative councillor was more progressive in his outlook than were the Governor-General and the President, neither of whom appreciated his proposed social laws. Bethune felt that there was a great fermentation of spirit among the people themselves such as "generally precedes great changes", on the question of female education and various other topics connected with the treatment of their women. He was repeatedly assured, as he said, by many most respectable and influential men that a law prohibiting polygamy would be received with almost universal contentment and satisfaction; and although they did not speak so boldly of infant marriages, they did not scruple to speak of them as a curse entailed on the country by their laws, and customs, and beliefs. Bethune further wanted to introduce the system of the remarriage of widows whose condition seemed to him to be more deplorable than ever and could count on popular support on this issue as well. He wanted to stir up all these questions,⁷⁷ and solicited for the support of Hobhouse, without having time to consult Dalhousie who was then out of Calcutta.

But John Hobhouse rejected all such views. He thought that Bethune had found persons, very intelligent, and, so far as Bethune knew them, very respectable, who were willing to second his benevolent intentions, and that such men had gone the length of telling the legislative councillor that a law prohibiting polygamy would be received with satisfaction. But to Hobhouse, these men appeared as merely "half a dozen clever, and, perhaps, not over scrupulous, associatés" of Bethune.⁷⁸ The Pre-

⁷⁷ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 857, fos. 189-92.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 860, fos. 1-2.

sident was prepared to agree with the legislative councillor that legislative innovations in social polity were not to be attempted without strong evidence that the wishes of the people pointed in that direction. But what Bethune interpreted as a popular desire, the President thought it to be the wishes of a few clever men, and therefore, warned the legislative councillor not to take up such measures. Here it may be pointed out that Bethune might have been wrong in thinking the opinion of a few as the desire of many, but it must not be forgotten that questions of social reform always originate with a few and not with many. Behind the talk of introducing the remarriage of widows stood a man like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar if not the mass of people in Bengal. The President of the Board of Control did not realise this. Instead, he began to cut jokes at the cost of Bethune, and said to Dalhousie,

“I have informed Bethune telling him he must, positively, not abolish polygamy—at the same time presuming that there is nothing to prevent gentlemen from confining themselves to one wife at a time if they choose it. He talks of ferments and agitations and such matters as well alarm me if I placed implicit reliance on his knowledge of facts.”⁷⁹

The Governor-General had heard nothing about Bethune's designs about social reforms. He was far away at Attock, and from there, he too, joined with the President in enjoying Bethune's move against polygamy. On 22 March 1851, he wrote Hobhouse,

“What you say about Bethune and his abolition of polygamy is written seriously, but it reads so like a joke

⁷⁹ D.P., Letters from Board of Control, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 24 January 1851.

that I am not quite sure whether he has really broached any such question to you or whether you use it only as an illustration. . . . If he proposes anything of the sort, of course I should veto at once. What have we got to do with prohibiting polygamy? We might as well interdict circumcision."⁸⁰

Hobhouse replied, "I can assure you that, so far as words indicate meaning, your Legislative Councillor must be concluded to have written in sober sadness. But I am glad he has confined his joke, if joke it be, to me."⁸¹ It is interesting to note that Dalhousie who supported Hobhouse against Bethune at this time on questions of social reform, himself, after a short time, was swayed by the intelligent opinion in the capital in favour of remarriage of widows, and became one of the champions to prepare ground for the introduction of the system through legislation.

Bethune's activities in the mean time were nearing an end. In August 1851 he was lying seriously ill at Calcutta. He had been suffering for some weeks from abscess of the liver, and his physician had ordered him immediately to Europe. But the advice came too late.⁸² It seems as if Bethune became doubtful of his recovery and therefore wanted to finish all necessary work for his school. "On Saturday the 9th of August Mr. Bethune after adding a codicil to his Will, executed a Deed conjointly with Baboo Dakhina Ranjan Mookerjee, a deed transferring the grounds and buildings in Cornwallis Square to the Hon'ble East India Company."⁸³ His ori-

⁸⁰ *Add. Mss.*, 36, 477, f. 365, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 22 March 1851.

⁸¹ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 7 May 1851.

⁸² *F.I.*, 14 August 1851.

⁸³ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 37, 9 August 1851.

ginal intention was to make over the school in a finished state to the Governor-General when the latter was expected back at Calcutta. But as he said to John Littler on 10 August,

“The critical state in which I have lately been, and indeed still am, made it necessary for me to change my plans and to make over the property at once to the East India Company with the expressive of a hope that they will receive and endow it in perpetuity as a Female School—otherwise in the case of my death the whole must have been sold under the general powers of my will for the benefit of my sisters.”⁸⁴

He had earlier paid Rs. 30,000 for the building of his school, and he made over an equal sum towards its completion, and also funds for maintaining it during the next six months.⁸⁵ The funds were placed in the hands of F. J. Mouat.

Within two days, at 3 o'clock on Tuesday, 12 August 1851, death occurred to Drinkwater Bethune at his house.⁸⁶ Halliday who saw him on the day before he died, described his calmness, courage, and cheerfulness as admirable, and spoke of “his female school as the anxiety that lay nearest to his heart.”⁸⁷ Mouat saw his intense and constant anxiety respecting the female school “up to almost the latest moment of his life and consciousness.”⁸⁸ It was observed on Bethune that “Few publicmen.... have ever had their conduct, both official and private, scrutinised with more severity and less generosity, than the late Legislative Member of Council. Few men have

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Bethune's Letter, 10 August 1851.

⁸⁵ *F.I.*, 21 August 1851.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 14 August 1851.

⁸⁷ *Diary of Dalhousie*, 1851, part ii, 24 August 1851.

⁸⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 37, Letter from Mouat, 27 August 1851.

ever been subjected to greater unpopularity by the part they have taken in public affairs, and few have ever collected around them a larger band of friends and admirers.”⁸⁹

Bethune's untimely death seems to have drawn genuine sympathy to his cause from many quarters. The transfer of the school to the government being Bethune's dying request, John Littler (hitherto an opponent of female education) took up the matter as President in Council and called for the opinions of his other colleagues. F. Currie trusted that some arrangements might be adopted by the Governor-General with the concurrence of the Court of Directors for carrying on, under the control of the government, the work that had been begun and which seemed to be one of great promise. J. Lewis hoped that the authorities “will not hesitate to give permanence and stability to this noble institution which owes its existence to the munificence of our late lamented colleague.”⁹⁰ But as the acceptance of the transfer of the school necessarily involved an increase of expense in the educational department, the President in Council referred the matter to the Governor-General.

Lord Dalhousie was then at Simla, where he mourned “over the news of poor Bethune most sincerely.”⁹¹ In several of his private letters written to various persons,* and in a fairly long note in his personal

⁸⁹ *F.I.*, 21 August 1851.

⁹⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 37, Minutes by Currie and Lewis, 14 & 15 August 1851.

⁹¹ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Dorin, 19 August 1851.

* Letters to Dorin, 19 August, to Littler, 21 August, to Halliday, 21 August (*vide* Letters to Presidency, vol. ii); and a letter to Sir Lawrence Peel, 9 September (*vide* Miscellaneous Letters to Various Persons in India), give evidence to Dalhousie's sincere feeling towards Bethune.

diary, the Governor-General made touching references to his dead friend. He said, "Notwithstanding some failings Bethune has been of essential service to this country during the few years of his stay and was everyday becoming more valuable and useful."⁹² And this led Dalhousie to appreciate him best when he could no longer benefit by his aid.⁹³

The school of Bethune now lay without its founder and patron. The Bengal Government had only recognised it, but not accepted as its own. With the unexpected death of Bethune, its future became uncertain, and a doubt was cast upon its very existence. At this critical time of that infant institution, Lord Dalhousie showed one of the noblest gestures of generosity, rarely seen in case of governors-general and viceroys. He came in where Bethune had left.

Dalhousie's immediate decision to take over the Bethune School to himself calls for some explanation. "That the school should come, and will come, ultimately under the charge and care of the Government I have no doubt. But I think that the same reasons which induced us in March 1850 to abstain as yet from adopting the school as a Government institution, weigh still. The experiment has continued, I understand, to prosper. I conceive it is more likely to be rendered thoroughly successful if carried on for some time longer as a private work, watched with the closer care which is the fruit of personal interest than if it were handed over to Government inspectors etc." said Dalhousie.⁹⁴ It was correctly felt by the

⁹² *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Littler, 21 August 1851.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, Dalhousie to Halliday, 21 August 1851.

⁹⁴ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Halliday, 21 August 1851.

Governor-General that even if the local government adopted Bethune's school, the institution from its novelty, would require the special approval of the Court of Directors, and till that approval was received a certain amount of doubt would hang over it. He could not be very sure of the Court's approval, and he did not want any sort of uncertainty as well.

Personally Dalhousie viewed the little institution of Bethune with much pleasure, as it was taking root among the higher classes of the Indian families, and thought it as "the germ of great results". By giving to it his own encouragement and fostering aid, Dalhousie wanted to please the Hindu intelligentsia.

The decision of the Governor-General also seems to have been motivated by some personal factors. Lady Dalhousie, according to him, "had been much interested in it (the school) since she was last in Calcutta."⁹⁵ Dalhousie thought that she might now take a personal and active interest in it. Her health was, at this time, very different from what it was in 1848, and the Governor-General hoped that "if it should continue as good as it is", it would enable her to take an active part. Besides this, it was Dalhousie's softness towards Bethune which drew his attention more towards his work. "Poor Bethune has left a blank which I shall fill", said the Governor-General. "There was a tie between us beyond the bond of red tape which had united us in England as well as in the East. His father was an old friend of mine, and thus we had feelings connected with the past in common, as well as more recent associations, objects and duties."⁹⁶

Bethune died on 12 August which news must have

⁹⁵ *Diary of Dalhousie*, 1851, part ii, dated 24 August 1851.

⁹⁶ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to Various Persons in India, vol. iii, Dalhousie to Lawrence Peel, 9 September 1851.

taken a few days to reach the Governor-General at Simla (there being neither rail nor telegraph in 1851). On 21st of the same month, perhaps within three days of the receipt of the news, Dalhousie communicated his decision to take over the school to Halliday at Calcutta in the following words.

"Unless there be objections which I do not foresee, I should like to adopt this school as my own so long as I may remain in India. . . . I do not propose. . . . to undertake the maintenance of this school as Governor-General but as Lord Dalhousie or I should rather say on the part of Lord and Lady Dalhousie, for my wife has been much taken up with it since she was last in Calcutta."⁹⁷

Dalhousie did not think it proper that the succeeding governors-general should be saddled with a private expense which he was going to incur for the school. His taking over the school was purely a private affair, as had been of Bethune, and therefore it was in no way binding on his successors in office. His main aim became to see the prosperity of the undertaking well maintained, and then to determine in course of time whether the Government would take it up before he left India. Lord Dalhousie knew that it would be difficult for him to look into the details of management as Bethune had done, and therefore, he requested Halliday to look after the school on his behalf, till some system could be settled. He was confident that his name as well of Lady Dalhousie would ensure for the school both funds and powerful protection. He was also sure that the people would take it with favour that the Governor-General's wife should take a personal and active interest in it. Keeping all these things in mind and having arrived at his deci-

⁹⁷ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Halliday, 21 August 1851.

sion, he requested Halliday to let the parents of the children who attended the school, and the gentlemen who took an interest in it, know, what was proposed regarding the school for future, so as to remove all doubt and fear from their minds, and so as to prevent enemies turning any apparent uncertainty to a bad account.⁹⁸

Thus the Bethune female school became, more or less the school of Lord Dalhousie. Soon after the death of Bethune a meeting of his friends was convened where it was resolved to raise a fund in honour of his memory. A sum of more than Rs. 6,000 was subscribed immediately.⁹⁹ Dalhousie saw that the views of Bethune's friends were also naturally "directed at once to perpetuating his loved school", but noted that "this will probably require some time and need not interfere with my wishes and acts regarding it."¹⁰⁰

From the contemporary newspapers it is evident that Dalhousie's taking over the school was received with great pleasure by the interested people. It was also hoped that the adoption of the school by the Governor-General would serve to manifest to the Indian authorities at Home the importance which was attached to the instruction of Indian females by those who occupied the highest position in India, and were so well able to form judgment on the subject.¹⁰¹ But the Governor-General himself did not want to call in the Court's assistance so soon and, therefore, declared, "Having undertaken on my part and that of Lady Dalhousie, as private persons, to provide for the maintenance of the Native Female School

⁹⁸ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, vol. ii, Dalhousie to Halliday, 21 August 1851.

⁹⁹ *F.I.*, 21 August 1851.

¹⁰⁰ *Diary of Dalhousie*, 1851, part ii, dated 24 August 1851.

¹⁰¹ *F.I.*, 4 September 1851.

....the question of its endowment by the Hon'ble Court does not press for immediate decision."¹⁰²

There was, however, John Hobhouse whose attitude towards the school was yet uncertain. Though he had not opposed Bethune in his work, he had at least not given proper encouragement, and had definitely disappointed him by not allowing to use the Queen's name.

Dalhousie seems to have understood that the President was not very favourably disposed towards the subject of education on the whole. Later, Dalhousie once described Hobhouse's views on the education of the people of India as "the sentiments of a political quack, combined with the policy of a Jesuit", and exclaimed, "Heaven forbid we should govern India on such principles and with such anticipations."¹⁰³ For the present Dalhousie apprehended that Hobhouse "may see paragraphs in the newspapers and may not know on what footing" he had taken the school. In order to remove suspicion from his mind, he said to him, "When Bethune died, poor fellow, he left his native female school considerable sums, and sent an earnest solicitation to the Government that it would adopt the school as one of its own. Conceiving it inexpedient to raise that question just at present, believing that great good will one day result from this institution if successful, and anxious to aid its progress, I intended that I would undertake the maintenance of the school on my own part and Lady Dalhousie's, as private persons, so long as we remain in India.... You may be easy in your mind, however; I am not so ambitious as poor Bethune. I will not ask the Queen to be patroness. I

¹⁰² *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. viii, 20 September 1851.

¹⁰³ *P.L.*, p. 254.

will not even ask Lady Palmerstone or Lady Jersey to be on the Committee."¹⁰⁴

John Hobhouse (now Lord Broughton) really showed his indifference by not thinking of giving any government assistance. He might have been aware that the school cost not a small amount to Dalhousie every month. Yet he wrote back to him, "What you and Lady Dalhousie intend regarding Bethune's Native Female School is very considerate, and, as it appears to me, quite suitable to the occasion."¹⁰⁵

Bethune, before his death, had done enough for his school. Mouat who personally visited and inspected the school, said, "I have never visited a more interesting institution or one that impressed me more favourably upon a brief acquaintance."¹⁰⁶ Bethune had made over the money to him with directions to cause the completion of the houses as quickly as possible, and it was done. Bethune had even dedicated by will the amount to be realised by the sale of all his magnificent furniture to the purposes of his school.¹⁰⁷ His death removed much of the opposition to his cause. Raja Kali Krishna Bahadur consented to accept the office of the president of the Victoria female school* and this was "the more gratifying, as the Rajah was, on the first establishment of the school, one of its most violent opponents."¹⁰⁸

Bethune had formerly planned to establish a female

¹⁰⁴ *Add. MSS.* 36,477, fos. 483-84; Dalhousie to Broughton, 24 September 1851.

¹⁰⁵ *D.P.*, Letters from Board of Control, Broughton to Dalhousie, 8 November 1851.

¹⁰⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 37; Letter from Mouat, 27 August 1851.

¹⁰⁷ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 3 October 1851.

* Sometimes the Bethune school was called as the Victoria school though it never became its official or permanent name.

¹⁰⁸ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 18 September 1851.

normal school to train teachers for female schools. This school, known as the Calcutta Female Normal School, was opened on 23 February 1852, at Tollygunge. It was for the want of a normal school that all efforts at vernacular education of the girls proved abortive, and this deficiency was going to be made up by the new normal school.¹⁰⁹

The friends and followers of Bethune who, after his death, formed themselves into a society as the Bethune society, worked whole-heartedly to spread his liberal ideas through free intellectual intercourse, lectures and other means. Within a year of its existence the society numbered 131 members, of whom 106 were Indians, and the list included, it was said, "many names which have become known beyond the circle of the metropolis." Dr. Mouat worked as the president of the society and its number continued to increase. Dalhousie supported the school and Lady Dalhousie kept it "under her charge."¹¹⁰

In the first week of January 1853 Lady Dalhousie paid a visit to the Bethune school and this was her last visit. On grounds of sickness she was obliged to leave India, and sailed on 23 January, very weak.¹¹¹ For sometime past the Governor-General himself was keeping very indifferent health. "I do not believe that, during the last two years, I have been one single month free from cold, constant relaxation of the membrane, loss of voice, and a malaise most distressing. Even now and then severe ulceration takes place....The uvula is entirely destroyed, and who can say whether the throat itself may not be injured next....I can't even walk as other men walk; frequently I can't stand, but limp like a lameter.

¹⁰⁹ *F.I.*, 18 March 1852.

¹¹⁰ *Dalhousie's Diary*, 1853, part i, dated 14 January 1853.

¹¹¹ *P.L.*, p. 243.

And I am rarely free from the pain of it for twentyfour hours together. This is my life. . . .",¹¹² said Dalhousie in January 1853 and from this time he seriously thought of retiring from India by 1854. At this stage, he thought it necessary to draw the notice of the Hon'ble Court towards the school of Bethune.

In a minute to the Court, Dalhousie clarified his motive why he took up the school which "was left upon the world." First, he said, that "a school so constituted was calculated to conciliate the good will of Hindoo gentlemen", and second, it was "gradually to break down their prejudices against female education so as to prepare the way for the introduction hereafter of a better and more complete system of instruction". He expressed his satisfaction that the school was gradually and silently working on to the ends for which it was founded and hoped that "it will go on and flourish." "But to that end", said Dalhousie to the Court, "It is necessary to provide for its maintenance after my departure from India, which I have no intention of postponing indefinitely. I am desirous therefore of seeing this effected." He made it distinctly understood that so long as he remained in India, it was not his wish to be relieved of the charge; but trusted that the Hon'ble Court would consider the school worthy of their support and would sanction the expenditure necessary for its support, after he had left India.¹¹³

The Court had to consider the question of relieving Lord Dalhousie from financial burdens, which ultimately meant taking over the school under the charge of the government. But the Court's intention does not seem

¹¹² *P.L.*, p. 240.

¹¹³ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiii, 26 May 1853.

to have been so good as to bear the full expenses of the school from the government exchequer. So, while "sanctioning the grant of such monthly allowance to the Bethune Native Female School as shall be necessary to maintain it in efficiency" the Court wanted that "A school fee should be taken from those who are able to pay." The Court directed the Indian Government that "their orders be carried into immediate effect in order that the Marquis of Dalhousie may be relieved of the expense he so liberally undertook."¹¹⁴

In any case, the Court's consent that "they should adopt the Female School" solved a great question. "It has afforded me the utmost satisfaction to know", said Dalhousie, "that this institution... will be upheld hereafter in full activity by the fostering care of the Government of India."

But he declined the liberality of the Court in wishing to relieve him, and said, "I have said that I have wished to maintain the school so long as I remained in India and have to beg that the arrangement may stand. Arrangements contingent upon my retirement may, however, be made now, to take effect after my departure."¹¹⁵

The Government of Bengal received the Court's despatch not without a protest. A minute issued by J. A. Dorin, agreed to by J. Low and F. J. Halliday, pointed out, "There is only one point suggested by the Hon'ble Court which strikes me as of doubtful expediency that is the levy of a school fee. Fees in such cases have not been found to work badly but where the experiment of female education is concerned I would not interpose the risk of

¹¹⁴ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 58; Court's Despatch dated 9 November 1853 reproduced in report of 3 February 1854.

¹¹⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes vol. xv; 20 January 1854.

even a small fee to the successful accomplishment of the design of the benevolent founder of the institution".¹¹⁶ Dalhousie agreed with the above view and the Court was informed of it.

The Court's recognition of the female education was secured at a time when Charles Wood was busy preparing his Education Despatch. Dalhousie had done his work. His minutes, it was said, had sounded "the first official pronouncement indicating the future policy of Government in regard to female education" and marked "the close of the era of non-interference, and the beginning of that of open encouragement."¹¹⁷ Grounds had thus been prepared in India which led the Home authorities to insert a clause on female education in their famous despatch of 1854.

So far as the evidence shows, without Bethune and Dalhousie's interest in the subject, the Despatch was not likely to recommend in favour of female education. Because, neither the East India House nor Sir Charles Wood was interested in it. Wood could not have been unaware of the progress of the Bethune School. Among the select few, with whom he consulted about his proposed scheme, it was Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, who, while referring to the girl schools in his presidency, told Wood that the movement in favour of female education might be regarded as "the greatest innovation of all."¹¹⁸ Yet the Wood papers show that in the first draft of the Despatch there was no mention of female education. In the second draft it was written, "...schools for females are included among those to which grants in aid may be given, and we are apprehensive that any more direct

¹¹⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 58, Minute by Dorin, 24 January 1854.

¹¹⁷ *S.E.R.*, Part ii, p. 47.

¹¹⁸ *W.P.*, *I.B.C.*, Elphinstone to Wood, 14 January 1854.

assistance from Government to this branch of education might rather obstruct than advance its success. . . .”

This clause, though harmful to the cause, was retained till the finalisation of the Despatch. But Cecil Beadon pointed out that “this is somewhat at variance to the orders already sent for the support of the Victoria School in Calcutta”. Upon this, Wood expunged the words “we are apprehensive etc.” from the final draft.

Edwardes (Sir Herbert?) gave another suggestion to be inserted in the Despatch that “model schools for females might be established with advantage.” But Wood was not influenced by this suggestion.¹¹⁹

The Education Despatch finally declared, “The importance of female education in India cannot be overrated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men.”¹²⁰ The authorities in their Despatch “heartily” approved of a former declaration of the Governor-General that “the Government ought to give to native female education in India its frank and cordial support”, and approved of the bestowal of marks of honour upon such Indian gentlemen as Rao Bahadoor Maghuabhoi Karamchand, who devoted Rs. 20,000 to the foundation of two female schools in Ahmedabad so that their “desire for the extension of female education becomes generally known.”¹²¹

But Charles Wood and the Court did not provide

¹¹⁹ *W.P., I.B.P.*, See different stages in the draft of Education Despatch.

¹²⁰ *P.P., H.C.*, 1854, vol. ix; Education Despatch, 19 July 1854, paragraph on female education.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

for an entirely free education for the female pupils, which the late Bethune and Lord Dalhousie would have so much appreciated. They applied the principle of grants-in-aid "alike to all schools and institutions, whether male or female" (See Appendix H). This system required "some fee, however small, from their scholars"¹²² boys and girls alike. The education scheme also did not provide for the establishment of government girl schools, even in the presidency towns. It was entirely left to the private initiative with assurance of aid from the government.

In some quarters it was said that the clause in the Education Despatch about the female education was but the directors' sanction of Lord Dalhousie's recommendation.¹²³ "It is a happy thing for India that this scheme has been launched before Lord Dalhousie leaves our shores", so was said for the latter's interest in the subject.¹²⁴

The education scheme was "a very great one", and Dalhousie assured Wood, "It will be a matter of time to get it into full play. At present I will only say that no delay shall occur, and that you may count fully on my giving my best energies to the execution of the scheme."¹²⁵ The papers of the Governor-General, both private and official, show that during one year and a half of his remaining Indian career, he was busy preparing for the establishment of the proposed universities, giving effect to the general education, and organising the machinery for

¹²² *P.P.*, *H.C.*, 1854, vol. ix; Education Despatch, 19 July 1854, paragraph on female education.

¹²³ *D.P.* no. 257-65; Extract from *Indian Homes*, 1 January 1855.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *D.P.*, Letters to Board of Control; Dalhousie to Wood, 18 September 1854.

its superintendence and direction as envisaged in the Despatch. Consequently, he could not give much attention to the subjects of comparatively less importance in the Despatch as that of female education.

Nevertheless, the government's recognition of the subject had its own effect. In Bengal, female schools were established by the local community at Dacca and at Howrah, for which grants-in-aid were sanctioned by the government. Some of the government officers took interest in the subject. In the eastern educational division of Bengal, the girl pupils attended at a few of the vernacular schools, where the local authorities extended to the girls the same rewards which were enjoyed by the boys. At one school, there were 19 Brahmin girls, all of good parentage, and it was hoped that in the indigenous schools the number of girls "would shortly be greatly increased." But it was also felt that it would be necessary that the means of instruction for girls should be provided for by government, as the people were still "opposed to the elevation of females."¹²⁶

Consequent upon the Despatch of 1854 a movement in furtherance of female education in the Agra district was commenced by the deputy inspector of schools, Gopal Singh, in 1855. The schools were attended by girls of all classes of Hindus including a considerable portion of Brahmins; and of "the girls the age of some exceeded 20 years, the remainder being from 6 years old to 20." The masters were selected by the parents of the scholars, and committees of respectable local gentlemen were formed to exercise a general supervision over the schools. At the beginning of 1857, the number of schools in Agra

¹²⁶ S.E.R., part ii, p. 435; Education Despatch of April 1859, giving an account of Female Education after the Despatch of 1854.

district had gone up to 288, and the attendance of the girls was estimated at 4,929.¹²⁷

The movement in the Agra district extended to the districts of Mathura and Mainpuri. "At a female school in the city of Mainpuri, there was an attendance of no fewer than 32 Mohommedan girls of respectable parentage."

In the presidency of Bombay, before the Despatch of 1854 was put into effect, there were eight girls' schools of which three were Marathi, one Gujrati, and four Parsee, the total number of girls being 500. There were no official return of the girls' schools in the mofussil. One of the members of the Bombay board of education had then described the spread of education among females as "the most remarkable incident in the history of public instruction" of that presidency.¹²⁸ Great interest was created over the subject at Ahmedabad and Poona. It was the opinion of the acting educational inspector of the Dacca division, Captain Lester, after the Despatch was put into effect, that "the prejudices against female education were fast disappearing", and that "there will be no more difficulty found in establishing female schools than there is in those for boys."¹²⁹

Before his departure from India, Lord Dalhousie had the satisfaction of noting that his Government had not lost sight of a collateral object, full of peculiar interest namely, the education of females of India. The Bethune school, though had struggled on but slowly, its progress

¹²⁷ *S.E.R.*, part ii, p. 435; Education Despatch of April 1859, giving an account of Female Education after the Despatch of 1854.

¹²⁸ *S.E.R.*, part ii, p. 51; Extract from an Address by Mr. Warden, 3 April 1854.

¹²⁹ *S.E.R.*, part ii, p. 436, Despatch of 1859 giving an account of Female Education after 1854.

had been steady, and still continued. The attendance had gone on increasing, until there were in February 1856 more than fifty scholars attached to the school.

"Everything, as I leave it, promises well"; said Dalhousie on the eve of his departure, "and as the Hon'ble Court has been pleased to take upon itself the maintenance of the school in future, I trust that such special interest will be shown in the undertaking by those of rank and influence on the spot, that its future progress will be insured, until it shall have acquired an extent and stability which will enable it to fulfil the high purpose for which its founder, Mr. Bethune, designed it."¹³⁰

The parting hope of the Governor-General proved to be true, and the Bethune Female School today stands as the premier institution for the education of women in India. Of Dalhousie's contribution it has justly been observed that "As William Bentinck had ventured to attack and had overcome the prejudice against anatomy and European medical science, so Lord Dalhousie was encouraged to introduce into India the European view of the necessity of education for women."¹³¹

The movement in favour of female education carried with it a greater significance. Hitherto, in respect of this subject, people everywhere evinced determined opposition. But from this time a changed approach to it was marked. Voluntary enterprises to promote the cause received aid and encouragement from the government. Wherever the education of girls came to be considered, many social evils like the system of purdah and

¹³⁰ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 16; Dalhousie's *Final Minute*, 28 February 1856.

¹³¹ *S.E.R.*, part ii, pp. 46-7; Extract from Arthur Howell's *Education in British India*.

child marriage received rude shock. Among the educated sections of society, existing customs and ideas opposed to the education of their daughters gradually began to disappear. These changes, slowly but effectively, pointed towards a new social outlook.

CHAPTER IX

The Measures to Abolish Female Infanticide in the North-West Provinces and the Punjab.

The custom of female infanticide continued to prevail among certain classes of people in the North West Provinces and the Punjab till the middle of the nineteenth century. The subject as such was not new to the British authorities in India. Since Jonathan Duncan, the resident at Benares (and afterwards the governor of Bombay), discovered it in 1789 among the Rajkumars near Benares, the attention of the government was drawn towards it. At different times during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, measures of different nature were adopted to abolish the practice among the Rajkumars of the above place and the Jadejas of Kathiawad and Katchh. Such measures succeeded only partly. In course of time further discoveries were made to show the prevalence of the crime among certain other classes of people. There was a desire to practise the crime secretly; and among the peoples who were already known to the authorities for it, there were attempts to avoid detection. Very many ways were adopted for this. For example, when W. H. Sleeman, the agent to the Governor-General in Saugor and Narbada territories, enquired into the matter, he saw that some Kuchwah Rajputs of the district of Allahabad had also their houses in the state of Rewa to which place they could send their females in times of necessity. The infanticide reporters in consequence could not get

information about the children born in those families. Sleeman addressed the Raja of Rewa requesting him to put down the evil, but at the same time thought it against rule to send reporters among Rajput families of that state which was not under the direct administration of the British. Another difficulty was felt about ascertaining fact in case of families at distant places that "one family would be constantly getting up charges against another of children made away with in secret, and it would be impossible for him (the magistrate) to get at the truth".¹

There were people among whom the practice prevailed unnoticed for long. By the middle of the nineteenth century Charles Raikes, the magistrate of Mainpuri in the-then North West Provinces, started a campaign against it which received support from the government. His examples were followed in the Punjab, where, after its annexation, the crime was discovered to be widely prevalent.

In the district of Mainpuri, two classes of people, the Chauhan Rajputs and the Pathak Ahirs, were addicted to the crime. The former were scattered over all the district and the latter inhabited some eighty villages on the rough high banks of the Jumna. Charles Raikes instituted a thorough enquiry, and discovered the principal causes of the crime among the Chauhans to be, the large sum which they considered it necessary to spend on the marriage of a daughter, ignorant pride which made a Chauhan rebel against the notion of being father-in-law or brother-in-law to any one, and finally the supers-

¹ *B.C.*, 1849, vol. 2303, coll. no. 118845, vide Report of W. H. Sleeman, 8 October 1847.

tition which led them to consider it unlucky to keep any daughter alive.²

With an object to prevent crime, Raikes issued a few regulations. In Chauhan and Pathak villages of his district, watchmen were employed to give information of the birth of a female child, forthwith, at the police station; after one month the health of the new-born child was to be reported; and if any illness attacked the child, a superior police officer was at once to see the child and report to the magistrate. In suspicious cases, the body of the child was to be submitted to the civil surgeon.³

The above regulations did not lead to complete suppression of the custom, but as Raikes saw, they only resulted in "some little success". In May 1848, he suggested to the commissioner of the Agra division that "if an act were passed, making father and mother liable to imprisonment with labour, on proof of grossly neglecting the health of their children, and by such neglect causing their death, that the crime of female infanticide might receive a considerable check".⁴ It may be pointed out here that one of the modes to kill a baby daughter was not to put her to death immediately after birth, but to leave her to negligence to die by itself. In case of such methods, it was easier to point out to the authorities that the death was a natural one. On account of this that Raikes suggested the above punishment. In his own zeal, he took further precautionary measures and awaited their results.

The authorities in England were fully aware of the practice of infanticide and at times took interest in the

² *S.R.G., N.W.P.*, 1855, vol. iii, part xii-xxi, Letter from Charles Raikes, 31 May 1848.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

subject. When informations reached the Court about Mainpuri affairs, the Chairman of the Court, Archibald Galloway, and other directors said to the Government of India,

"It is with surprise and regret we find from the report of Mr. Raikes, the officiating Magistrate, that no great success has hitherto attended the efforts to check the crime of infanticide amongst the Chouhan Rajpoots in this district. We trust the subject will receive your most careful attention".⁵

Such timely notes from higher authorities had their influence on subordinate officers in India. Charles Raikes busied himself in his district, and after more than three years of his further attempts, he was satisfied to see that some of his measures had been effectual. In 1842, according to him, "scarcely a daughter was to be found in the houses of the Chauhan Thakoors", but when he gathered statistics in October 1851, there were 1488 girls living, of six years and under.⁶

When the matter was brought to the knowledge of James Thomason, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Provinces, he became greatly interested, but disapproved of any system of prevention of the custom through police or watchmen which was thought to be offensive to the sentiment of the people. Thomason said that, "the best method of suppressing the crime is to direct one's efforts to the correction of the social institutions and customs which prompt to it".⁷ It is interesting to see that when the Lieutenant-Governor expressed such opi-

⁵ *I.B.D.*, 1849, vol. 62, p. 989, Court's Despatch, 12 September 1849.

⁶ *S.R.G.*, *N.W.P.*, 1855, vol. iii, part xii-xxi, Letter from Raikes, 17 November 1851.

⁷ *I.B.D.*, 1851, vol. 69, pp. 902-6, vide Court's Despatch 18 March 1851.

nion, the Court of Directors began to think of the subject in the same light. The attitude of the directors on questions of social policy was rather inconsistent and not too rigid, and could change from time to time according to influences from India. The directors wrote to India in March 1851,

"The attention of the Commissioner (of the Agra division), and of the Joint Magistrate, appear to be directed with zeal and energy to the adoption of proper measures for the suppression of this revolting practice, but we concur generally in the observations made by the Lieutenant-Governor, respecting the impolicy of any system of prevention, calculated to act oppressively on the community".⁸

Raikes had to take a cautious move so as not to rouse social hostility towards the move, and decided to proceed on the lines as the Lieutenant-Governor desired. He was led to believe that the very surest and best manner for the extinction of this unnatural crime was to initiate a move against it by the agency of the people themselves. Under this impression, he invited the Raja of Mainpuri, and many of the chief Chauhan Thakurs of the district to discuss the matter with them. It may be pointed out here that the rajas of Mainpuri traced their descent from raja Prithee Raj, the last Chauhan ruler of Delhi, and therefore, were in a position to enjoy a very high rank among the Rajputs. The late raja preserved his infant grand-daughter, probably the only female child, so it was said, "which has been born and continued to live within the Chouhan fortress since its erection."⁹ This was a good beginning among the Chauhans. But it so hap-

⁸ *I.B.D.*, 1851, vol. 69, pp. 902-6, vide Court's Despatch 18 March 1851.

⁹ *Moffussilite* quoted in *Allen's Indian Mail*, 18 October 1951.

pened that prior to the raja's death, the child's father died, and then died the old raja himself, and thus terminated the direct ancestral line. So deep was the reverence to the custom of infanticide that the superstitious Chauhan ascribed the death of raja and the end of his dynasty to the preservation of the child's life. The succession passed to the late raja's brother.

When the new raja and the Chauhan chiefs met Charles Raikes,* they were assured that there was "no desire to exercise any authority over their consultations". The latter only gave them some suggestions against the crime. One of the main causes which led to infanticide among the Chauhans was the heavy expenses of marriage. It was said, "The cause which nourishes this blot on human nature is pride, that curse of caste which renders it disreputable for one of high descent to betroth his daughter to an inferior, while the poverty of the race denies the power of making ceremonial gifts, indispensable, in their opinion, where the child is affianced to one of equal rank"¹⁰ The Rajputs were not slow to realise this and they agreed with Raikes to cut down the marriage expenses greatly. Raikes was surprised to see the enthusiasm and zeal with which those people "entered upon the work of self-legislation". Several resolutions were passed by them concerning marriage expenses.¹¹

Simultaneous with the efforts of Charles Raikes in Mainpuri, M. R. Gubbins, the magistrate of Agra, attempted to put down the custom in his district. In the beginning of 1851, his attention was drawn by the local

* The meeting took place on 12 November 1851 in the camp of Charles Raikes at Sumaon.

¹⁰ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 18 October 1851.

¹¹ *S.R.G., N.W.P.*, 1855, part xii-xxi, Letter from Raikes, 17 November 1851.

Hindu and Muslim officers to the prevalence of the practice in the pargana Bah Pinahat of the Agra district where he introduced a system of preventive rules. An enquiry was made in the remaining parganas of Agra, and in the "suspected villages" of those parganas similar rules were introduced. Gubbins was helped by the local officers who "one and all recommended the introduction of a system of strict supervision". They advised that "all pregnancies after the foetus had quickened, as well as births and deaths, should be registered in the Thakoor villages, and inquests held on the bodies of all female infants dying at an early age".¹² Gubbins was sorry to note that beyond the issue of certain proclamations* early in the century, no measures had been taken in Agra to check or put down the practice since the accession of the British rule. He drew the attention of the Agra authorities to this fact and took keen interest in the subject himself.

Raikes and Gubbins were encouraged in their attempts by the Commissioner of the Agra division, W. H. Tyler. As an effective step to start a campaign against the custom in the whole of Agra territories, it was decided that the Rajputs of the districts of Etawah, Farrukhabad, Agra, Patiali and Budaun would be invited to gather together at Mainpuri where the commissioner would discuss with them about the abolition of the practice. The meeting was arranged and it took place on 5 December 1851. According to the description of an observer, on the above date,

¹² *Ibid.*, vide Memorandum on Female Infanticide by M. R. Gubbins, 23 January 1854.

* Proclamations required by Section 11, Regulation III of 1804, which were notified under the orders of the Bareilly Court of Circuit, dated 30 September 1809

"...the quiet little station of Mynpoory was thrown into a state of unusual bustle and excitement. All sorts of oriental processions,—elephants, camels, horses, and raths,—were to be seen converging on the large plain. Hundreds of honest, sturdy-looking pedestrian Rajpoots, each with his tulwar (sword) under his arm, were trudging along through the dust which their wealthier chiefs kicked up. All had attended the invitation of Mr. Tyler, the Commissioner, to a grand and solemn meeting convened by him, ostensibly for the purpose of lowering marriage expenses, but in reality with the object of putting down female infanticide, which the marriage expenses promote".¹³

In the meeting several questions were asked, but no objections were urged. It surprised the Englishmen to see that many were even "loud in their praise of the measure". The old raja of Pratabnagar referred to a prophecy which said that "a time was to come, about the year 1900 sumbut, when a great reform of religion might be looked for", and this reform, they said, "had now come". An agreement was reached in the meeting to reduce marriage expenses, and three hundred and sixty signatures of chiefs, their relatives and village headmen, were attached to it.¹⁴ Every chief solemnly pledged his word to assist in the humane object.

Tyler hoped that the good examples set by the Rajputs of the Agra division would be followed soon in other districts, and suggested to the government that the copies of the report submitted by Raikes be forwarded to the several district officers within the North Western Pro-

¹³ *Agra Messenger*, 13 December 1851.

¹⁴ *S.R.G., N.W.P.*, 1855, vol. iii, part xii-xxi, Letter from Raikes, 9 December 1851.

vinces, as also to the chief authorities in Oudh, Gwalior and Rajputana.¹⁵

Thomason saw with great interest the accounts of the proceedings of the meetings. Since he believed in bringing about a social revolution through the people themselves, the methods adopted by his subordinate officers pleased him well. He communicated his thanks to Raikes for the active part he had taken in the cause, and forwarded complimentary letters at the same time to that gentleman for presentation to the principal parties concerned. Upon the suggestions from Charles Raikes, the Lieutenant-Governor also saw no objection to the issue of a proclamation to the police officers, prohibiting the tumultuous assemblage of *bhats*, as well as of any other persons, during the wedding ceremonies of the Rajputs. Thomason desired that the papers on the subject would be published in the selections of public correspondence, copies being furnished to all the magistrates, with a recommendation that measures in the same spirit should be adopted by them, wherever the crime prevailed.¹⁶

While such developments were taking place in the North West Provinces, the prevalence of the crime to a very great extent in the Punjab came to the notice of the government. In 1846, shortly after the acquisition of the Trans-Sutlej territories, the attention of John Lawrence, then the administrator of the annexed province, was attracted towards the crime. It was known then that there were many hundred families throughout the Punjab among whom a single female child for generations had not been allowed to live, and there were thousands of families among whom the practice of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, W. H. Tyler to Govt. of N.W.P., 20 December 1851.

¹⁶ *B.C.*, 1853-54, vol. 2537, coll. no. 147526, Extract from Judicial Narrative, 22 June 1852.

female infanticide was a social custom. Among the Bedees, a branch of the Sikhs, the crime was seen to have invariably prevailed and throughout the Punjab the Bedee race was known as the 'Koree mar' or daughter slayers.¹⁷

John Lawrence, at the time above alluded to, tried to enlist the powerful influence of Bedee Bikram Sing, the recognised head of the race, in the movement against female infanticide. But that "turbulent and bigoted priest", thus it was said of him, "did not consent to use his influence to put it down".¹⁸ It was only one Bedee of note and eminence, Baba Sumpoorun Sing, a lineal descendant of the founder of the sect, Baba Nanak, and cousin to the above Bedee Bikram Sing, who came under the British influence and allowed a female child to live in his family. It was said that he preserved the child at "the representation of Lord Hardinge when in the Punjab in 1846".¹⁹ For the time the matter ended there. Lawrence had many intricate questions before him in reference to the first Sikh War and in the light of gathering troubles in the Punjab leading to the outbreak of the second war, and consequently he could not give further attention to the subject.

After the final annexation of the Punjab, the matter was taken up afresh. Late in 1851, Major Lake, the deputy commissioner of Gurdaspur in the Punjab, became aware of the existence of infanticide among a class of people in his own district.²⁰ He on his own initiative made thorough enquiries, and brought it to the notice of

¹⁷ *B.C.*, 1853-54, vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, vide Letter from P. Melvill to J. P. Grant, 8 July 1853.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vide Minute of R. Montgomery, 16 June 1853.

²⁰ *F.I.*, 27 October 1853.

the commissioner of the Lahore division, G. Barnes, who forwarded the report to the Board of Administration.²¹

The information that was submitted by Barnes to the Punjab Board of Administration was not sufficient and therefore the Board could not take any general measures. But the matter required necessary steps, and so, a circular was sent to all the commissioners, throughout the Punjab, directing them to ascertain whether the crime of infanticide prevailed in their divisions, and if so, to what extent, and to suggest what measures they thought most likely to be effectual in suppressing the practice. The Punjab Government was aware of what Charles Raikes did among the Chauhan Rajputs, and to know the details of the methods adopted by him, the Board applied to James Thomason to supply them with "copies of any rules which might have been agreed to by the Rajpoots of Mynpoory".²²

It was gradually coming to the notice of the Punjab administrators that the custom was widespread in that part of India, and the Punjab being the last to be conquered by the British within the natural frontiers of India, the people there were so far from new ideas and influences. This fact created some special interest among some Englishmen stationed in that quarter. Among the Punjab officers, Major H. B. Edwardes, the deputy commissioner of Jullundur, took pains for "much research" into the subject and to know the causes of the crime. The Bedees of Jullundur constituted a small tribe but they universally practised it. Major Edwardes discovered that "the practice was first enjoined upon their tribe by

²¹ Selections from Govt. Records, Punjab, 1857, i-iv, Selections from Public Correspondence, no xvi, vide Minute by R. Montgomery, 16 June 1853.

²² *Ibid.*

Dhurm Chand Bedee, grandson of Baba Nanak". It arose out of a momentary wrath of that spiritual leader, and consequently took a religious colour and continued into posterity as a social custom mixed with religious pride. The story runs thus :

Dhurm Chand had two sons named *Mihr Chand* and *Nanuk Chand*, and one girl, who, at the proper age, was espoused to the son of a *Khuttree*, as was then the custom of the *Bedees*. When the *Bridegroom's* procession reached the house of *Dhurm Chand*, the door was found too narrow to admit the litter on which the boy was carried; and the riotous attendants, with more than the usual licence of the occasion, proceeded to widen it by force. The incensed *Bedee* prayed, "that the threshold of the *Khuttree* tribe might, in like manner, come to ruin"; and the nuptial rites were celebrated amidst mutual ill-feeling. When the bridegroom and his party were departing, the two sons of *Dhurm Chand*, as in duty bound, accompanied them to give them "*Rooksut*". The weather was hot; the party out of temper, and they took a malicious pleasure in taking the young *Bedees* further than etiquette required. When the lads returned home footsore, *Dhurm Chand* asked, "If the *Khuttrees* had not bid them turn back sooner?" The boys said "No"; and it was then that the old man, indignant at all the insults which the bridal of his daughter had drawn down upon him from an inferior class, laid the inhuman injunction on his descendants, that "in future no *Bedee* should let a daughter live". The boys were horror-stricken at so unnatural a law, and with clasped hands represented to their father, that to take the life of a child was one of the greatest sins in the *Shastras*. But *Dhurm Chand* replied, "that if the *Bedees* remained true to their faith, and abstained from lies and strong drink, provi-

dence would reward them with none but male children. But at any rate, let the burden of the crime be upon his neck, and no one else's", and from that time forth Dhurm Chand's head fell forward upon his chest, and he evermore walked like one who bore an awful weight upon his shoulders.

Through the mists of the story which Edwardes heard from the Bedees, he could ascertain that the religious pride and the horror of giving a daughter to an inferior caste and not pecuniary considerations first led the Bedees to adopt the custom of female infanticide.

He questioned some Bedees closely upon the actual mode of their infanticide. When a daughter was born, he was told, "the mother turned her face to wall well knowing the sentence that awaited her offspring, and the silence of disappointment was soon broken by the elder matrons of the family commanding the nurse to put the child to death". There were various ways in which this order was executed. "Sometimes the nurse stopped the infant's breath with her hand but oftener the object was effected by neglect; by exposing the babe in winter on the cold floor, and in summer by aggravating heat". One of his informants told Edwardes, "You see, Sir, they are but poor little things and a puff of wind puts them out".²³

In this connection, it may be pointed out that various were the ways of destroying infant lives as gathered during enquiries. At many places "the child was destroyed immediately after birth by filling the mouth with cowdung or by immersing the head in cow's milk or by drawing the umbilical cord over the face". All these

²³ *B.C.*, 1853-54, vol. 2564, coll no. 151171, Letter from Edwardes, 30 June 1852.

means were "calculated to prevent respiration and cause immediate death". In the Gujrat district the practice was to bury the infant alive. The body was placed "in an earthen pot the top of which is covered with a thick paste of dough". Frequently a small pill of opium was administered which caused death within a few hours. In the Kangra district, "the juice of the Madar plant (*Asclepias gigantea*)" was administered or death was brought about "by causing injury to the navel".²⁴

At places peculiar ceremonies followed the extinction of life in the baby. Edwardes gathered information that the Bedees buried the corpse with a piece of 'goor' or sugar-candy between the lips and a twist of cotton in the hand and reciting over the couplet,

"Eat your goor and spin your thread :
But go and send a boy instead".*

The Bedees denied this, but were not offended at the quotation, and during investigation even one of them corrected Edwardes in rehearsing it and explained its meaning.

The Bedees practised the crime with so much zeal that any body among them who kept a daughter was excommunicated. One of them, Punjab Sing of Mukundpur, being an educated man and well-read in the religion of his race, declared that the *Granth* contained no authority for the custom and preserved two daughters that were born to him. "For this", as Edwardes saw, "he was excommunicated by Baba Bikram Sing, the head of the Bedees, and all but his own family treated him as a sweeper, throwing to him from

* *Ibid.*, vide Report of R. Montgomery, 16 June 1853.

* In their words: "*Goor Khaieen, pownee kuteen
Ap na ainecn, bhuyan ghulleen*".

a distance money or anything else they had occasion to give him".²⁵ When the government interference became inevitable, the Bedees in general, though did not want to oppose the move, did not view it with pleasure. From the beginning of the British rule, apprehension was entertained that infanticide might be disclosed by the census of the revenue settlement, and this brought home the prospect of legal punishment to every Bedee family.

Like Edwardes, E. C. Bayley, the deputy Commissioner of Kangra, tried to discover the cause of infanticide among the Rajputs of that place. They had no religious sanction behind the crime, and Bayley gathered information that "the crime of female infanticide has been largely practised by this tribe owing to the difficulty of providing for their daughters. . . ."²⁶

In the meantime, Charles Raikes achieved very good results in Mainpuri and came to be regarded, as R. Montgomery said of him, "the originator of the grand movement". He was transferred at the end of 1852 from the North West Provinces as the commissioner of Lahore division, and upon this, it was said, the whole subject received "a fresh impulse". R. Montgomery, the judicial commissioner for the Punjab, declared that he was "fortunate in having the aid and counsel of that able officer".²⁷

By the middle of 1853, the reports were received from all the commissioners regarding the state of affairs in their respective areas. By that time the Board of Administration for the Punjab had been abolished, and the

²⁵ *B.C.*, 1853-54, vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, Letter from Edwardes, 30 June 1852.

²⁶ *B.C.*, 1853-54, vol. 2549, coll. no. 148980, vide Letter from MacLeod, 2 May 1853.

²⁷ *B.C.*, 1853-54, vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, Minute by R. Montgomery, 16 June 1853.

chief commissioner, Sir John Lawrence, put the matter in the hands of R. Montgomery for disposal. For various causes there had been unusual delay in furnishing the reports. But the delay was not altogether to be regretted, because it had enabled the district officers to investigate the subject more thoroughly. The reports were generally very full. The most interesting among them were three, that of Major H. B. Edwardes from Jullundur, of E. C. Bayley from Kangra, and of Major Abbott from Hoshiarpur, all the three above named gentlemen having entered on the subject with energy and zeal.

The reports revealed that infanticide was practised more or less in the Cis-Sutlej States, and in Jullundur, Lahore, Multan, Jhelum and Leia divisions.* Besides the Bedees and Rajputs, it was also practised on a limited scale by some of the Khuttreys and Brahmins, as also by certain Mussulmans of the tribe Rat.

The cause of infanticide among the Bedees has been discussed. Among the Rajputs, the practice was known to be of extreme antiquity and "arose from combined motives of pride and poverty". They believed that their daughters should marry only their equals, or their superiors. "It follows then", said G. Barnes who investigated into the cause of the crime among the Rajputs, "that as we ascend the scale of society we must eventually reach those who stand on the highest rung of the ladder and admit no superior. These classes find themselves in an awkward dilemma,—either they must bring up their daughters unmarried, or they must provide husbands for them and thereby confess that they are not the high and exclusive race to which they lay claim; either alternative is attended with disgrace, and there is but one remedy,

* See Appendix I.

viz., to destroy their female infants : and hence we see the farce of conventional rules—murder may be committed without any stigma attaching to the murderer, but artificial restraints cannot be avoided without loss of caste and honour”.²⁸

To add to the above causes, there was yet another. Among certain sections of people, especially in Rajputana, “the primary cause of the prevalence of the crime” was supposed to be “the determination of the chiefs not to allow their daughters to remain unmarried beyond the age of ten”, and the knowledge of this feeling induced the fathers of the boys to demand heavy bribes for their consent.²⁹ The Khuttees, Brahmins and Mussulmans of the Punjab committed infanticide being “driven to it by their inability to meet the heavy marriage expenses”.

Thus it was seen that “Pride drove the Rajpoots and Bedees to commit the crime, poverty drove others”. “Either the fathers’ fortunes or daughters’ lives”, said Edwardes, “must be sacrificed. The choice lying with the fathers they chose infanticide in preference to beggary or wounded vanity”.

Besides the causes of pride and poverty, there were a few other factors as well which prompted infanticide. In some instances it was regarded simply as a means of proving the purity of their race. The Munha Rajputs, for instance, when in the hills, were the lowest of their tribe, and their children were consequently safe. But in the plains they became highest, and in order to prove that they were such, they killed their children. The same causes were also in operation among some Mussulmans. Added to all this, the principle of consanguinity was

²⁸ B.C., 1853-54 vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, Minute by R. Montgomery, containing Extract from Report of G. Barnes.

²⁹ Vide *Benares Recorder* quoted in *Allen's Indian Mail*, 16 April 1853.

pushed to the wildest extreme. Almost every Rajput was the relative of every other; all who were descended from one common ancestor considered themselves blood relations after the lapse of centuries, and down to the last degree, marriage was forbidden.³⁰

R. Montgomery proposed to the Punjab Government for the immediate adoption of a few measures. They were, to issue proclamations denouncing the crime, to call the heads of the tribes to suppress it, to call the heads of the villages to give information of the crime, to take the annual census of the male and female children, to hold a grand general meeting of the heads of all tribes and classes known to practise it within hundred miles of Amritsar, to call the district officers to throw the whole weight of their influence into the scale, to request McLeod, Raikes and Barnes to preside over the grand meeting with the Chief Commissioner at their head, and finally to furnish the commissioners of Multan and Jhelum with copies of the resolutions which might be passed at Amritsar.³¹

John Lawrence, like James Thomason, believed that to suppress the crime it was necessary to effect "a radical change in the feelings, the prejudices, and the social customs of the people themselves". He strongly deprecated any strict system of suppression by the police or a system of espionage, which were too likely to enlist the feelings of the people against the government efforts, but thought that the "personal influence of British officers, the knowledge that they take an interest in the matter, a desire by the people to stand well in the eyes of their

³⁰ *F.I.*, 27 October 1853.

³¹ *B.C.*, 1853-54, vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, Minute by R. Montgomery, 16 June 1853.

Rulers, and lastly the fear of punishment ; will doubtless from year to year, operate in diminishing the crime".³²

John Lawrence was astonished to hear about the large sums which the marriage ceremonies necessitated. People lived to save money to marry their daughters, others impoverished themselves for life to outvie their neighbours. 17 lakhs of rupees were said to have been spent at the marriage of Kunwar Monmohl Sing with the daughter of the Ataa chief; 8 lakhs at that of the raja of Aloowalah. Raja Tej Sing expended a lakh of rupees at the wedding of his niece married to the son of a poor Brahmin. Lawrence aimed at attacking this social custom in order to attain the best results.

The measures suggested by R. Montgomery with all necessary papers were sent by John Lawrence for the consideration of Lord Dalhousie. The Governor-General read them, as he said, "with the deepest interest and gratification". "I can conceive no purer or higher source of pride for the public officers of a state, than such a record as this of the wide and rapid success of their exertions on behalf of the honour of our rule in the rescue of suffering humanity", said Dalhousie.³³

In a private letter he said to Montgomery :

"What you have already effected does you all the highest honour; and the future will yield you a still more abundant harvest not only of honour, but of that which is far better—the consciousness of having diminished the sum of human ills, in the sphere within which your public

³² *Ibid.*, Letter from Melvill, Secretary to Chief Commissioner, 8 July 1853.

³³ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiii, A August 1853.

lines have moved. You may count ever on the best and most cordial aid all my power can furnish".³⁴

Besides giving such encouragement in private, the Governor-General thought it necessary also to give public encouragement to all the officers in the Punjab interested in the matter. Issuing a minute on female infanticide on 8 August 1853 he declared,

"I desire to express in the strongest language of cordiality and sincerity the high and grateful approbation with which the Government of India regards exertions on the part of its officers, which are so eminently calculated to reflect honour on the British name, and to add largely to the material happiness of the people whom Providence has lately confided to our care.

"The Chief Commissioner of the Punjab and his officers may rely with implicit confidence upon the desire of the Governor-General-in-Council to manifest his appreciation of the wise and benevolent object they have proposed themselves; and of his readiness to afford them at all times every encouragement and aid which can be supplied by the full measure of his power".³⁵

Dalhousie approved of all the steps proposed by the chief commissioner, John Lawrence and the judicial commissioner, R. Montgomery. But in his determination to eradicate the custom, he went much further. John Lawrence had suggested rather a mild policy without any direct threat to the people on behalf of the government. Lately, the directors of the East India Company had written to India in the same manner, saying,.... "in any measures adopted for that purpose (suppression

³⁴ *D.P.*, Letters to H. Lawrence and others, Dalhousie to Montgomery, 8 August 1853.

³⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiii, 8 August 1853.

of infanticide), it is important to their success that the public feeling should go along with them".³⁶ Dalhousie, on the other hand, wanted to adopt a strong policy instead of a conciliatory one. He was of opinion that the sentiments of the government in condemnation of that horrible crime should not be left to make their own way upon the convictions of the people, but should be openly proclaimed, and enforced by denunciation of certain punishment upon those who were convicted of offending. The punishment which Dalhousie thought of was severe. He declared in his minute,

"There are two causes alleged for Female Infanticide; the one is a religious one, founded upon peculiar tenets or considerations of caste; the other is a pecuniary one, arising out of the habitual expenditure of large sums upon marriage ceremonies.

"The Government can bring its authority to bear upon both causes by proclaiming that the destruction of female children is murder, whatever may be the moving cause of the crime, and that it shall in case of conviction be implacably visited with the punishment justly due to every murderer".³⁷

The Governor-General began to consider a suggestion made by Major Lake that every Bedee family which received a pension from government should hold it only on condition of pledging itself to the abandonment of infanticide. On the other hand, he was prepared to sanction any rewards or honours or even titles which the chief commissioner might recommend the government to bestow upon a few of those who might have been most forward in abandoning the inhuman practices which

³⁶ *I.B.D.*, 1853, vol. 82, pp. 465-66.

³⁷ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiii, 8 August 1853.

their fathers pursued.³⁸ Dalhousie encouraged the Punjab authorities to arrange the proposed meeting at Amritsar on a grand scale, and awaited its results.

John Lawrence left it to R. Montgomery, the judicial commissioner and G. F. Edmonstone, the financial commissioner, to regulate the procedure and affairs of the Amritsar meeting. These two officers took utmost interest to make it a success. Numerous invitations were sent to the rajas, sardars, and other gentlemen of rank and position to attend the meeting. At the same time, in accordance with the desire of the Governor-General, a proclamation was issued throughout the Punjab, denouncing the crime of infanticide, and threatening all who were proved guilty of it, with punishment, as for murder. The Bedees were warned that if they continued to perpetrate the crime, besides incurring the above penalty, they should also forfeit all their jagirs and other pensionary allowances which they received from the government.

Upon special instruction from John Lawrence no invitation was sent to Bedee Bikram Sing who was then residing at Amritsar. It may be recollected that this man had always been opposed to the efforts of the officers to suppress the crime. His claim to the headship of the Bedee clan was considered to be a pretension. John Lawrence preferred to give this honour to Bedee Sum-poorun Singh who belonged to the older branch of the Bedee family and who was known to the government as a supporter of the movement. Special invitation was sent to him to attend the meeting.³⁹

The time of the grand meeting was fixed to coincide

³⁸ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xiii, 8 August 1853.

³⁹ Selections from Govt. Records, Punjab, i-vi, 1857-, Public Correspondence, no. 263, Melvill to Montgomery, 19 September 1853.

with the Dewali festival of the Punjab, on 29, 30 and 31 October of that year (1853). According to the previous arrangement John Lawrence was himself to be present in the meeting. But "owing to urgent business on the frontier" he was unable to attend. His interest in the meeting was nevertheless great, and he wanted that all the high officers must attend. When he heard that G. Barnes was not attending the meeting, he said to him, "I am sorry you are not going to the Amritsar meeting. Were you not a *nimuk aram* (a Hindi slang) you would have managed it. You are a sad reprobate for a Commission. It would have been very useful had you been there to influence your old friends, the Kangra Rajpoots".⁴⁰ Of course, Barnes did attend the meeting.

A notable absentee was Charles Raikes who was "prevented from attendance by illness". Not only that his interest was great, but that he was personally very popular. Lawrence had once estimated his qualities thus : "The former (Raikes) is much liked by the people, they give him a good character and say that he goes thoroughly into his cases and does not hop to conclusions. I suspect he takes more pain with his work than in reporting it and this is the proper course, as reality is better than show".⁴¹

With these exceptions, all the European officers took part, and it was said that so large a body of civil officers, the representatives of the British Government, were never perhaps before in India collected together. They all vied with each other in forwarding the objects of the meeting. The utmost good feeling prevailed, and

⁴⁰ L.P., no. 2a, p. 35, Lawrence to Barnes, 31 October 1853.

⁴¹ L.P., no. 1a, p. 328, Lawrence to Barnes, 2 September 1853.

the most hearty co-operation was offered.⁴²

The number of the people assembled was numerous. Among them were the members of the late darbar, the representatives of all the leading families among the Sikhs, the chieftains of the Kangra hills, the Bedees of Dera Baba Nanak, the commercial heads of every city of note within two hundred miles of Amritsar, and the delegates from every district representing the agricultural and trading interests. The city of Amritsar, the commercial capital of the Punjab and always crowded at the Dewali festival, was unusually so on this occasion. It was with difficulty that accommodation could be found for numerous strangers. The ground outside of the city was covered with the encampments of innumerable Indian chiefs, with their followers. It was marked that the people entered heartily into the object of the meeting and expressed themselves gratefully for the interest government had taken in their welfare.⁴³ There was "not a single expression of disapproval, disappointment or displeasure".

The business of the meeting was opened by Edmonstone, who after a few preliminary remarks read a translation of the Governor-General's letter, conveying his sanction to and his approval of the objects of the meeting and his determination to punish all who might be hereafter convicted of female infanticide, as for murder. Thereafter the deliberations continued for three days. On the closing day of the meeting, an 'Ikramamah' or agreement was signed by all the heads of the representatives of the people. It said,

⁴² B.C., 1853-54, vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, Report of Montgomery and Edmonstone, 9 December 1853.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

"The crime of infanticide being so hateful to God, and exorable in the eyes of Government, and of all pious and good men, we will, at once, cause the apprehension of any person of our tribe who may perpetrate the crime in our illaquahs, or villages, and bring the same to the notice of the authorities; and we will expel from caste any person who may refuse or show reluctance to join in the endeavours to accomplish the above object".⁴⁴

One of the chief causes of infanticide being the expenditure of enormous sums of money on occasions of marriage, the people gathered at Amritsar agreed to reduce those expenses. They decided to adopt in their several castes and tribes certain regulations regarding marriage charges to be prepared by panchayats in presence of district officers. A great evil concerning marriage ceremony was the gathering of *bhats*, *raes*, *duts*, *bhands*, *naes*, *mirasees* and beggars who clamorously used to demand charity, and even threatened the parties concerned on their persons with knives and stones. Against such elements it was decided that if any such party should, in future, be found to conduct itself in an outrageous and harassing manner, it would be apprehended and handed over to the police.

Rajput rajas of the Kangra and other hill districts entered into an agreement making arrangements for limiting the outlay to be incurred on marriages. It was agreed upon that the rajas would spend 5,000; the meeanas being brothers of rajas 2,500; distant relations of rajas 1,100; other Rajputs, zamindars, lumberdars etc. 200; and *begarees* (coolies) and other persons of inferior caste, 80 rupees only.⁴⁵ The Bedees of Dera Baba Nanak

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Appendix B.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendix D.

divided themselves into four classes and agreed to follow a scale of expenditure exclusive of jewels for the bride which was to depend on circumstances of her parents. According to their scale, first class people were to spend 500; second class 400, third class 250; and fourth class 125 rupees only.⁴⁶ The zamindars gathered in the meeting also adopted similar scales for themselves.

The British officers were said to have done their best to appeal to the natural feelings of the people, to excite their hopes and arouse fears, and the commissioners felt sure that all that was done at Amritsar "will be long impressed on the recollection of all who witnessed the interesting spectacle, and that it will have the most powerful moral effect". Some might still cling to the notions which had been fostered in their minds since childhood, but the fear of detection, the shame of exposure and the inevitable consequences were sure to have their effect.

It may be said that a silent change was taking place among the people themselves which made the government intervention easy. Some of the Rajput and Sikh chiefs had given lead to their people in this respect. The instance of the raja of Mainpuri has been discussed earlier. In the Rajput royal house of Kangra, raja Purmodh Chand, preserved four of his own daughters, though his race was strongly "addicted to the practice of female infanticide".⁴⁷ For several years past the raja

The above agreement was signed by the following rajas:—Raja Shumshare Sing Gooberia, raja Purtab chand Kutock, raja Sree Sing Chumbawalla, raja Aggur Sim Suketwalla, raja Bejai chand Aullundi, raja of Naini Tal Koltcherea, raja Jodhbeer chand Nadownwala, raja Juswant Sing Noonpoorea.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Appendix E.

⁴⁷ *B.C.*, 1853-54, vol. 2549, coll. no. 148980, Edmonstone to Melvill, 16 May 1853.

of Aloowalah earnestly endeavoured to persuade the Bedees of Phugwarah to give up infanticide and with such good effect that when Edwardes saw them in June 1852 there were about 25 Bedee daughters living there.⁴⁸ Some of the Bedee leaders like Baba Sumpoorun Sing and Punjab Sing preserved daughters in their families. The religious superstition and the pride of the race gradually declined. "Their prestige is gone and their religion is rapidly going out of fashion", said Montgomery who was himself glad to note that among them "a strong feeling of abhorrence now exists against the crime".⁴⁹

Before the general proclamation of Lord Dalhousie was issued prohibiting the crime as murder, all the individual efforts to save daughters, as described above, were viewed by Government with pleasure and satisfaction. The brother and heir of the late raja of Mainpuri who had saved a female child claimed a money allowance from the British Government to which he had no hereditary right, but the allowance was given to him only "as a reward to the family for having ventured to break through so revolting a custom". "The desire evinced on the part of so old and influential a family, to set an example, the moral effect of which is calculated to be so beneficial, should however be recognised by some mark of your approbation", said the Court of Directors to the Indian Government.⁵⁰

Raja Purmodh Chand was deposed and punished by the British Government on political grounds and died in exile. But on the recommendation of the Punjab authorities the Governor-General-in-Council became "willing to help the daughters of the late chief in getting

⁴⁸ *B.C.*, vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, Report of Edwardes, 30.6.1852.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Report of Montgomery, 16 June 1853.

⁵⁰ *I.B.D.*, 1851, vol. 69, pp. 902-6, Court's Despatch, 19 March 1851.

married only in consideration of the creditable fact. . . . of their having been brought up in a family which belongs to a tribe notoriously addicted to female infanticide"⁵¹ The raja of Alloowalah received a letter of thanks, and Punjab Sing Bedee, a "Khilut".

The grand meeting of Amritsar practically gave a death blow to the crime of female infanticide. John Lawrence believed that the "success of the meeting was remarkable" and that "its moral effect will be lasting".⁵² He was pleased to note a few things, that the gathering of all ranks was very large, the great object in view was thoroughly and widely appreciated, the sympathy of the people was roused, and that throughout the vast throng there was apparent and hearty desire to co-operate with the authorities.⁵³ To Dalhousie, Amritsar affairs marked "the commencement of a new social era among a people of the countries beyond the Jumna".⁵⁴

Dalhousie read the report of the proceedings "with the deepest interest". It was beyond his expectation that in so short an interval such eminent success would be achieved. He was much impressed with the labour of the Punjab officers and said, "The benevolence, the perseverance, the judgment, and tact, by which this harmonious result has been educed from out of such various and discordant materials, are honourable in the highest degree to the gentlemen whose names are enrolled in the record before me". He thought it his duty to represent their merits to the Honourable Court.⁵⁵ In a

⁵¹ B.C., 1853-54, vol. 2549, coll. no. 148980, Govt. of India to Chief Commissioner, 9 June 1853.

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, Secretary to Chief Commissioner to Govt. of India, 31 December 1853.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ D.P., Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xv, 20 January 1854.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

private letter to Lawrence, Dalhousie further expressed his delight and declared the whole business to have been the "most honourable to all concerned".⁵⁶

The Amritsar meeting was followed by a series of other meetings throughout the Punjab. In all subsequent meetings, the decision of the Governor-General was proclaimed, and the Amritsar resolutions were adopted.* Since the resolutions reduced the marriage expenses, they were particularly welcome to the people everywhere. Many influential persons put them into practical effect. Dewan Harichand, who held a high office under the Maharaja of Kashmir, carried out the ceremonial expenses at his daughters' wedding "strictly according to the spirit of the Amritsar agreement". In the marriage of a daughter three years ago Harichand spent 15,000 rupees, but after the Amritsar meeting he spent only 1000 rupees at the marriage ceremony of his next daughter. Major Clarke, the deputy commissioner of Gujranwala, requested Charles Raikes for his thanks to the dewan, and his commendation for such other men as Rao Mool Sing of Gujranwala who helped the government in its object.⁵⁷ Among the British officers Charles Raikes was most enthusiastic in spite of his health. In December 1853 he thought of going away, but his presence was felt so much necessary that John Lawrence said to him, "I hope sincerely you will not go away. I should indeed

⁵⁶ *D.P.*, Letters to H. Lawrence and others, Dalhousie to John Lawrence, 21 January 1854.

* After the Amritsar meeting the following were the most important:
5 December 1853, meeting at Gujranwala;
24 January 1854, meeting at Shahpur;
2 January, at Jhelum; 5 and 8 December, 1853 at Rawalpindi;
16 and 17 March 1854 at Bhureel; 29 December 1853 at Multan etc.

⁵⁷ *D.P.*, no. 131, Selections from Public Correspondence of the Punjab, Clarke to Raikes, 8 December 1853.

regret your departure but if your health really requires the change you would do wrong not to go".⁵⁸ Raikes stayed on.

Large popular meetings which followed that of Amritsar distinguished themselves as a new feature in British Indian administration. Through such means, it was thought, "that the objects of humanity will be more effectually attained, and a more sure and speedy stop put to the crime of infanticide, than if a whole statute-book of penal acts and regulations had been promulgated on the subject".⁵⁹ At Gujrat both Hindus and Muslims united together to put down the custom in their respective communities. At Shahpur heads of the principal Mahommedan and Hindu families assured the government officers that "they considered the measures proposed for the suppression of the crime as a proof of kindness and consideration, as well as of the justice of their present rulers".⁶⁰ The people of Rohtas, Pind Dadan Khan, Chakwal and Talagang, representing several castes, received with lively satisfaction the reduction of marriage costs.⁶¹ In Rawalpindi, where the crime prevailed still to a considerable extent among the Moyal Brahmins and the Adhyegur Khuttreas who represented the very essence of high aristocracy among several sects of Hindus, public opinion rapidly gained strength and influence against the custom.⁶² Everywhere it was seen that the people felt relieved and obliged by the course which the government adopted, "in opening to them a way of escape, from the burden which custom has hitherto compelled

⁵⁸ *L.P.*, no. 2a, pp. 90-91, Lawrence to Raikes, 26 December 1853.

⁵⁹ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 14 February 1854.

⁶⁰ *B.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 2609, coll. no. 164216, Hallings to Thornton, 27 January 1854.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Browne to Thornton, 30 January 1854.

⁶² *D.P.*, no. 131, Carnac to Thornton, 15 February 1854.

them to bear", viz., excessive marriage expenses. All asserted that infanticide had been discontinued, and that "the reduction of marriage expenses will tend to remove the temptation to its commission". Moreover, in course of the meetings, "on each occasion, the whole assembly gave their evidently cordial assent to the observation that the practice...was unnatural, and displeasing to the Supreme Being".⁶³

The most important of all the meetings held after that of Amritsar was one, on the border of Kashmir, to bring the infanticidal tribes of Jammu under the new influence. It may be pointed out here that Maharaja Goolab Sing of Kashmir and Jammu had issued a proclamation in December 1847 prohibiting the institutions of sati, infanticide, and slavery in his dominions. Goolab Sing had denounced these customs as crimes. For this the Government of India recorded their thanks to the Maharaja and caused his proclamation to be published in a supplement to the Calcutta Gazette.⁶⁴ But in spite of the Maharaja's proclamation the crime of infanticide seems to have continued.

When the British officers launched their campaign in the Punjab, and everywhere met with success, the Kashmir authorities desired to avail themselves of the benefits of the new movement. Charles Raikes was at that time (March 1854) at Sialkot where he received an invitation from Prince Runbeer Sing, the son of Maharaja Goolab Sing, to unite with him in calling upon the Rajput and other tribes, under the Kashmir hills, to suppress female infanticide, and to regulate marriage expenses. Raikes thought that a meeting of

⁶³ *Ibid.*, E. Thornton to R. Montgomery, 6 March 1854.

⁶⁴ *Hurkaru*, 23 December 1847.

this sort would benefit the people of his own division, as much as those across the border, and after consulting R. Montgomery, he agreed to meet the Prince on the frontier of his territories, at a village called Bhureeal, about 14 miles from Sialkot and 12 from Jammu.⁶⁵

When his intention became known to John Lawrence, he disapproved of it and said, "If you have not had your Infanticide meeting at Jammu; I think it would be well not to have it. However excellent the object, Government would probably object to any interference in an independent territory".⁶⁶ As a matter of fact, the social policy of the British had not been carried into the territories of the Indian princes in a vigorous or effective manner, and on account of this Lawrence did not want to extend the campaign against infanticide into the boundaries of Kashmir.

The letter from Lawrence was issued on 15 March, but before it had reached Raikes, he was already at Bhureeal, and the meeting took place on 16 and 17 March. It was held in the darbar tents of the Prince, attended by a vast assemblage of influential land-holders, from the district of Sialkot, and from the adjoining Jammu territory. The Prince produced a scale of expense for wedding occasions and for two days the discussion of this scale was carried on. Eventually it was accepted. After the agreements had been signed, Charles Raikes read the proclamation of the Governor-General and gave a short account of the proceedings at Mainpuri, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Amritsar, asking the people to accept his proposals and promise to put down the child murder in the presence of the Prince and the

⁶⁵ *D.P.*, no. 131, Selections from Public Correspondence, Raikes to Montgomery, 20 March 1854.

⁶⁶ *L.P.*, no. 2a, p. 162, Lawrence to Raikes, 15 March 1854.

British officers assembled there. The response was hearty and Raikes said that "both Prince and people will unite in this great reform".⁶⁷

Prince Runbeer Sing was seen to be thoroughly in earnest. It came to the knowledge of Raikes that ever since the publication of the Governor-General's proclamation and the Amritsar meeting he had fully "addressed himself to the task of putting down female infanticide within his father's dominions". To test his sincerity further, Raikes asked him to give up a cess of rupees one hundred which had been hitherto levied on each wedding completed in his territories by persons resident on the British side of the border, and he at once passed his word that from the day of the meeting the tax should be abolished.⁶⁸

At the end of the business Raikes said to Montgomery, "The social reform, which has already to my certain knowledge made real and substantial progress in our Punjab territories, will extend to the Kashmir mountains, and will be hailed with gratitude in every town and village. On this point the people at large, on either side of the border, feel alike, they rejoice at any excuse, for shaking off a tyrannical custom which has hitherto plunged most families into debt". Raikes requested the Punjab authorities to bring the conduct of Prince Runbeer Sing to the favourable notice of the Governor-General.⁶⁹

Dalhousie received information about the above proceedings from private sources and immediately wrote to Raikes, "Without expending a sentence in assuring you of that full and cordial approbation with which I have

⁶⁷ *D.P.*, no. 131, Raikes to Montgomery, 20 March 1854.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

learned of your meeting with Meer Runbeer Sing, I beg to congratulate you on the spreading success of the measures which you were the first to mould, and in the influence they are already exercising over other rules, as well as our own. There is genuine pleasure in such a sight. I will most readily act on your suggestions regarding the Meer whenever the official letter reaches me".⁷⁰

John Lawrence did not know that Dalhousie would congratulate Raikes for his affairs with the Kashmir Prince. When he saw the matter in the newspaper, he wrote to Raikes directly disapproving his work, and Raikes had to explain that he would not have done it, had he been aware of his views. Lawrence said to Montgomery, "I see he (Raikes) has had a meeting with Runbeer Sing in the Jummoo territory about infanticide and got him to give up a tax which is levied on marriages. All this is excellent in itself, but I wish he had asked my consent first. I would not have done it off my own bat even, but would have asked the Governor-General. If the local officers can interfere in one thing, they may do so in another and mischief may arise".⁷¹

By April 1854 all the supplementary meetings were over. Everywhere the people showed a lively interest. They were now able to preserve their daughters and proudly show them, it was said, "without fear of being treated as *mahters* (sweepers), as one heroic Bedee father was in the days of Sikh rule". It was also hoped that "Infanticide will soon be in the Punjab what Suttee is to India at large, . . . a thing to be wondered at in recollection".⁷²

⁷⁰ *D.P.*, Miscellaneous Letters to Various Persons in India, vol. vii, Dalhousie to Raikes, 27 March 1854.

⁷¹ *L.P.*, no. 2a, pp. 180-81, Lawrence to Montgomery, 29 March 1854.

⁷² *Agra Messenger*, 18 March 1854.

Satisfied with the progress of the campaign, Dalhousie sent the papers to the Home authorities and said, "Your Honourable Court will doubtless peruse these papers with as much interest and gratification as we have done; and we trust, the exertions of the several gentlemen, which have ensured the cooperation of the influential men in the Punjab in the benevolent design of suppressing the horrible crime of child murder, will meet with suitable acknowledgment from your Honourable court."⁷³

When all the meetings were concluded in the Punjab John Lawrence sent a comprehensive report on them to the Governor-General. He agreed with Charles Raikes and R. Montgomery in thinking that Prince Runbeer Sing merited some notice from the Government of India for his thoroughly earnest efforts. He pointed out to the Governor-General that the proceedings of all the meetings were the "results of the great moral demonstration at Umritsur" the fame of which had spread "far and wide."⁷⁴

Dalhousie repeated his sentiments on the social importance of this subject as he had done on previous occasions. He said, "The success already achieved within the space of a few months has far exceeded the most sanguine anticipations of the Government; and I venture to utter a feeling of humble confidence that a blessing will rest on this good work, whereby it shall be made to spread and prosper". He expressed cordial thanks of the Government to Montgomery the judicial commissioner, as well as to the commissioners, Raikes, Thornton, Edgworth, and Major Ross,—to the deputy commissioners,

⁷³ B.C., 1853-54, vol. 2564, coll. no. 151171, Letter from Government of India to Court, 4 April 1854.

⁷⁴ B.C., 1854-55, vol. 2609, coll. no. 164216, Government of Punjab to Government of India, 24 April 1854.

Inglis, Carnac, Captain Brown and Major Clarke. "Especially, I would desire to congratulate Mr. Raikes", said Dalhousie, "on the special success of the meeting held near Sealkote, which gave gratifying proof that the example set by the British Government had been applauded and followed by the foreign state upon our borders."⁷⁵

The Governor-General sent a "Khureeta" to Maharaja Goolab Sing and another to his son, couched in complimentary and appropriate terms. To the Prince he said, "This laudable intention of yours has gratified me much. The eradication of a custom which is revolting to the feelings of nature, will be a sure means, of acquiring a good name in the world. I am persuaded however that this wicked practice will be entirely abolished in a short time by your adoption of proper measures."⁷⁶ The Maharaja was thanked for his principles of justice and his best exertions to abolish that crime of the blackest dye.*

⁷⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. xviii, 13 May 1854.

⁷⁶ *B.C.*, 1854-55, vol. 2609, coll. no. 164216, Letters from Governor-General to Runbeer Sing and Goolab Sing, 25 May 1854.

* To the Maharaja of Kashmir the Governor-General wrote the following:—

I have learnt from a report of the Chief Commissioner of the Punjab that in the meetings which had for their object the adoption of measures to prevent infanticide, Your Highness acting on the principles of justice expressed your promptitude to employ your best exertions for the abolition of the practice of infanticide which is a crime of the blackest dye. This expression of your Highness was supported by Meer Runbeer Sing at the meeting recently held on the frontier of Sealkote and Jummoo under the joint superintendence of the Meer and the Commissioner of Lahore. . . . These circumstances have gratified me much, for it is undeniable that the destruction of mankind, whom the Creator of the world made the noblest of all other species of his animal Kingdom, is extremely abominable and revolting to the feelings of nature. Hence the abolition by your Highness of this wicked practice will unquestionably redound to your fame in every quarter of the globe for your sense of justice, and will be consistent with the will of God. I am persuaded that your sincere exertions will soon

The Court of Directors derived extreme satisfaction from the documents relating to female infanticide. It approved the Governor-General's decision that "the law would be allowed to take its course and that persons convicted of infanticide would be punished for murder." At the same time it felt that "an evil so widespread and of such long standing did not admit of remedy without the cooperation of the people themselves, and that their cooperation could only be obtained by means of the utmost prudence and judgment on the part of officers vested with public authority."

The directors hoped that the barbarous practice would, in consequence, come to an end, and said to the Indian Government, "...should there be instances in which it may still take place, that they will admit of being punished under the law as crimes, with the concurrence and approbation of society at large."⁷⁷ In accordance with the desire of Lord Dalhousie the Court warmly acknowledged the merit of the Punjab officers who took part in the good work and wanted it to be conveyed to them.

The abolition of the crime in the Punjab led to its subsequent suppression elsewhere. Eyes of the British officers fell wherever the crime was suspected to exist, especially within the jurisdictions of the Indian princes. Upon the report of lieutenant-colonel Sleeman, the Court of Directors took a serious view of the fact that "the officers of the Oude Government have made little progress in putting down infanticide."⁷⁸ The Court observed with

bring about the abolition of that practice (in your State). I hope that I may be gratified from time to time with the tidings that your constant object is the welfare of your people.

⁷⁷ *I.B.D.*, 1854, vol. 87, pp. 1227-35, Court's Despatch to India, 19 July 1854.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 88, p. 1210, Court's Despatch to India, 4 October 1854.

pleasure that the raja of Neemrana exerted himself for the extirpation of this barbarous practice.⁷⁹ The raja of Rewa aided with success in the suppression of infanticide in his state and the Court was gratified to note that.⁸⁰ Such views of the authorities had their effects on the princes, and they had to suppress the crime in their respective territories to please the supreme government.

It can be said that before the close of Dalhousie's administration, the North West Provinces and the Punjab were practically free from the above crime. Dalhousie could think before his departure that the "greatest triumph" had been accomplished in the Punjab, and agreed with John Lawrence that, if "future success should crown these initiatory measures, then in some respects a social revolution will have been effected. Not only will a barbarous and secret crime have ceased, but endless abuses connected with the betrothal will be repressed, domestic morality improved, and the female position secured."⁸¹ For his personal interest in the matter the Governor-General was described as "the active friend and benefactor of women in India", and at his farewell, the members of the Calcutta Missionary Conference rightly expressed their heart-felt gratitude for successful efforts for the suppression of female infanticide during his rule.⁸²

A "social revolution" which Dalhousie thought of through the suppression of such unnatural practices followed in the course of time. The main cause of female infanticide, was the fear of giving a daughter to a man

⁷⁹ *I.B.D.*, 1855, vol. 90, p. 1480, Court's Despatch to India, 20 March 1855

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 92, p. 999, Court's Despatch to India, 15 August 1855.

⁸¹ *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 38, Dalhousie's Final Minute, 28 February 1856.

⁸² *D.P.*, no. 93, Farewell Address by Calcutta Missionary Conference.

of unequal rank, and among the Rajputs and the Bedees, the problem of marriage had long created artificial social divisions which tended to disappear once infanticide was suppressed. The heavy expenses of marriage and the custom of paying dowry, were the other social evils which encouraged the crime of infanticide among certain classes of Hindus and divided even a single caste into superior and inferior sections. The social regulations putting down such expenses ultimately led to a social understanding among the people leading to the disappearance of such distinctions.

But greater was the effect of such measures on the mentality of a people accustomed to superstitious ways of life. The custom of infanticide like that of sati represented more or less an antiquated society. The end of those customs, which was the result of European influence, marked the beginning of a more rational way of thinking among the people of India towards the various aspects of their social life.

CHAPTER X

The Suppression of the Meriah System among the Hill Tribes of Orissa.

The practice of human sacrifice in the hill tracts of Orissa, Madras and the then Central Provinces was first discovered by the British authorities in 1836, but vigorous measures to suppress it were not taken until the middle of the century. These hill tracts were inhabited by several aboriginal tribes, the chief among whom were the Khonds, and therefore, the area was generally referred to as the "Khondistan", or the land of the Khonds.

It was in the cold season of 1835-36 that the Hindu raja of the little state of Goomsur¹ revolted against the British. During the course of military operation against him, the British troops first ascended the ghats lying at the back of the district of Ganjam, and made their first acquaintance with the Khonds and their country. "It was then discovered that these people had been in the immemorial habit of performing annual sacrifices of human victims, the victims being usually purchased or stolen in the plains below, and sold to the Khonds, by persons who made a trade of such dealings."²

The credit of its discovery goes to G. E. Russell of the Madras civil service who was sent to suppress the

¹ The Goomsur territory was situated between 90°40" and 20°25" of Latitude and 80°10" and 85°5" of E. Longitude. Its extent from east to west may be estimated at about 60 miles and from north to south at about 48 miles.

² *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 17; Report of J. P. Grant, Commissioner of Enquiry in Hill Tracts of Orissa (dated nil).

Goomsur revolt. Beyond Goomsur he saw the Khond country where the hills were bare of jungle and the inhabitants infinitely more numerous. He noted about them, "Their language differs from that of all other classes, and is understood by very few low-landers.... Like other nations they have their feuds, and frequently war with their neighbours. Head for head is their universal law. Their love of liquor and tobacco is excessive.... They draw no milk from any description of cattle, yet they have none of the ordinary prejudices of caste, and eat anything except the dog, domestic cat, beasts of prey, vulture, kite and snake."³ While trying to know more about them, Russell discovered that among the Khonds of Goomsur, and among many of the neighbouring tribes the barbarous ceremony of human sacrifices prevailed. In some places the victims were of both sexes; in others, males only.

When he reported the matter to the Madras Government, the Governor-in-Council considered it highly desirable to take necessary measures, and said, "Wherever British influence already prevails, or can be newly introduced, it should be vigorously exercised for the suppression of these barbarous rites."⁴

Within a few months of further enquiry Russell could know the details of the Khond ceremonies. The ceremonies attending the sacrifice and still more the mode of destroying life varied from place to place. In the *maliahs*⁵ of Goomsur the sacrifice was offered annually to 'Thadha Pennoo' (the earth) under the effigy of a

³ S.R.G., (India), Madras, no. xxiv, (1856), part i, p. 11, Report of G. E. Russell, 12 August 1836.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Extracts from minutes, no. 1197, 9 September 1836 (The rites included also infanticide among the Khonds.)

⁵ The Khond districts.

bird, intended to represent the peacock, with the view of propitiating the deity to grant favourable seasons and crops. He could also gather information that besides those periodical sacrifices, others were made by single villages, and even by individuals, to avert any threatening calamity from sickness, murrain or other cause.⁶ (See Appendix J).

For several reasons Russell felt that the suppression of the practice was "a question of much difficulty". The Khond territories, commencing southward with Jeypore and extending beyond the Mahanadi, embraced many parts of the Nagpur provinces and a large belt of territory till then independent. "The people with whom we have to deal", said Russell, "have become known to us only within the last few months, and our intercourse has been confined to a very small portion of a vast population, among the greater part of whom the same rites prevail, and of whose country and language we may be said to know almost nothing. We must not shut our eyes to the fact, that, although we may desire to limit our interference to the territory owing subjection to us, any measure of coercion would arouse the jealousy of a whole race, possessing the strongest feelings of clanship, and whatever may be their dissensions in ordinary life, likely to make common cause in support of their common religion." He did not think it wise that the government should engage in an undertaking, which to be effectual to the end in view, must lead to the permanent occupation of an immense territory, and involve a war in a climate inimical to the constitution of strangers, and at an expense which no human foresight could calculate. He, therefore, said to the Madras Government that "the

⁶ *S.R.G.*, Madras, no. xxiv, (1856); Report of G. E. Russell, 11 May 1837.

superstitions of ages cannot be eradicated in a day", that "no system of coercion can succeed" and that "a law denouncing human sacrifices and providing for the punishment of persons engaged therein, would, as a general measure, prove abortive." "In my judgment", he argued, "our aim should be to improve, to the utmost, our intercourse with the tribes nearest to us, with the view to civilise and enlighten them, and so reclaim them from the savage practice, using our moral influence rather than our power."⁷ Russell was much obliged to the collector Mr. Stevenson, and his assistant Captain Campbell, both of whom helped him greatly in knowing the Khonds.

The Madras Government felt sorry that nothing could be done at once, but it called upon the sub-collector of Ganjam to furnish "every information upon this painfully interesting subject" and to exert "to convince the people of the heinousness and folly of this practice."⁸ He was also asked to cultivate as much as possible a personal intercourse with the chiefs of the Khonds.

This duty fell upon Captain Campbell, who had been assistant and secretary to G. E. Russell throughout the war, and at its end, became assistant to the Governor's agent in Ganjam. Captain Campbell (afterwards Colonel) is regarded as "a pioneer in the cause."⁹ The Goomsur rebellion was over. The territory had been resumed and peace restored in 1836-37. The Khond districts belonging to the territory of Goomsur thus fell directly into British hands. The sudden discovery of the horrible fact

⁷ *S.R.G.*, Madras, no. xxiv, (1856); Report of G. E. Russell, 11.5.1837.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Extract from minutes, 21 November 1837.

⁹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 17; Report of J. P. Grant, Commissioner of Enquiry in Hill tracts of Orissa, (Dated nil).

that human sacrifices were systematically and extensively celebrated, before thousands of spectators over a large tract of country, which had been nominally under British dominion for nearly seventy years, attracted much attention. The hill people who occupied the same range of hills to the southward, or rather southwestward of the Khonds were called Sauras, who were quite distinct from the Khonds, but they too, or some of them, the Englishmen began to believe, unquestionably performed human sacrifices like their neighbours. When Campbell turned his attention to the question of meriah, the Khond districts of Goomsur were in a very favourable state for being worked upon. Because, a part of them had suffered intensely in the operations of the war, many chieftains had suffered capital punishment and the people were thoroughly cowed. Taking advantage of the situation, Campbell went into the Goomsur hills and during the winter of 1837-38 rescued from the hills 100 meriahs or victims. He also collected in an assembly all the Khond headmen and caused them to swear to abandon the rite. Campbell believed in a vigorous action.

But the Madras Government seem to have feared that there was danger in the method of Campbell's procedure, and instructed him to abide strictly by Russell's recommendations and to restrict himself entirely to advice and persuasion.¹⁰ In spite of this, in each of the cold seasons, he made a short visit to the hills, and occasionally took away some meriahs. His opinion was that if he had been allowed to command the cessation of the rite, and to punish violators of that command, he, without risk, could succeed in suppressing it in the Goomsur Khond hills. He was pleased to see that the Hindu chiefs,

¹⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 17; Report of J. P. Grant, Commissioner of Enquiry in Hill tracts of Orissa, (Dated nil).

who could not set themselves up against the immemorial custom of the Khond country, were prepared to help the government and asked for detachments of armed peons. But the government did not give him a free hand, and he had to work, as was said, "without any encouragement."

In February 1842, Campbell left Goomsur to join his regiment in China, and upon his departure, the meriah system revived there again. The government appointed Captain Macpherson to take charge of the department, but his operations were more conciliatory and were confined to a limited area. Beyond Goomsur, in wide areas of the Gondwana, human sacrifice continued as usual. Of course, it will be too much to say that all Khonds everywhere practised it. For example, Macpherson made a short expedition into the hills to the southwest of Goomsur in the winter of 1841-42 to survey a proposed line of road. In that expedition he made the unexpected discovery that large tribes of Khonds did not perform and even abhorred the sacrifice. It was not known that none of the tribes of the two zamindaries lying to the south of Goomsur sacrificed meriah. But they practised female infanticide. Exceptions, however, do not reduce the immensity of meriah custom, because, the Khond population was big.

More was the light thrown on the enormity of the crime, and the extent of the misery which it occasioned, greater was the realisation of the futility of partial efforts for its suppression. The population was scattered over a

* The Khonds dwelling in the hill tracts of Vizagapatam and Ganjam were within the jurisdiction of the Madras Government, those in the outskirts of Cuttack were under the Bengal presidency; many of the Khond districts were in the dominions of the Nagpur raja, and in the adjoining zamindaries of the hill chiefs.

vast area under different jurisdictions.* This led Lord Elphinstone, the Governor of Madras, to suggest to the central government about a "unity of action." In a forceful and long minute, he requested for the institution of an agency directly under the supreme government with wide discretion and jurisdiction to suppress the meriah.¹¹

It was not until July 1845 that this agency¹² was sanctioned, and Captain Macpherson entered upon the duties of his new office in December. So far, the Khonds in their hill fastnesses were practically independent of all political influence, and the sudden interference in their religion caused a stir among them. Rumours spread that "Government had resolved to measure and assess all their lands, to subject the people to forced labour, and to punish the leading men for past sacrifices."¹³ Taking the opportunity of this discontent, the rebel leader of Goomsur, Chokro Bissye, who never recognised the British authority, broke into hostility with the government. According to British accounts, he had with him a supposititious child of the late raja, whose heir was a state prisoner, and called upon the people of Goomsur to aid in the restoration of the Bhanj family, a raj of seventy-five generations (so he said), which was dispossessed of the zamindary in 1836.¹⁴ The disturbance broke out in December 1846. In his fight against the British, Chokro Bissye received support from the raja of Angul and some chiefs of Baud.

This took the Governor of Madras, Lord Tweed-

¹¹ *S.R.G. (India)*, n.v., (1854), Operations for Suppression of Human sacrifice, Lord Elphinstone's Minute, 16 March 1841.

¹² It was called the Meriah Agency and was put under the immediate control of the Government of India.

¹³ *R.M.A.*, p. 24, Account of operations in 1846.

¹⁴ *S.R.G. (India)*, no. v, (1854), Operation for Suppression of Human Sacrifice, p. 101.

dale, (father-in-law of Lord Dalhousie) by surprise. He saw Goomsur in a state of ferment and thought that this would be followed by the different tribes of Khonds. Tweeddale complained to Hobhouse, "I think it is a pity that any of the civil management was made over to the meriah agent.... Capt. Macpherson has been selected by the Supreme Government, and has received his instructions from the same authority. I, therefore, say nothing. A Proclamation was issued by the Council of India, declaring war with all who should resist their orders in regard to putting an end to human sacrifice. This is all right. But, before issuing such a declaration, it would have been wiser to have first ascertained what means they had of carrying the order out."¹⁵ The rebellion of Chokro Bissye made the Governor so nervous that he complained of the want of sepoys in the Northern Division, pointed out that his sepoys had been hard-worked during the Sutelj campaign and for some time past, and requested urgently the residents of Hyderabad and Nagpur to despatch each a regiment into the hostile area.

The Goomsur disturbance continued for several months. Lord Hardinge said to Hobhouse in April 1847, "With the exception of the disturbances in the Khond territory, occasioned by the mismanagement of the officer charged to put an end to the horrid meriah sacrifices, general tranquillity prevails throughout Her Majesty's Eastern dominions."¹⁶ Macpherson was recalled, and on 21 April Col. Campbell was appointed agent. He, according to the estimate of Tweeddale, was "a very judicious man" and was "well acquainted with the country and its

¹⁵ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 854, fos. 3-4, Governor of Madras to President, 7 January 1847.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 853, f. 362, Hardinge to Hobhouse, 5 April 1847.

inhabitants." The Governor thought that if he and his assistants MacLeod and MacVicar did not 'settle matters, and put a stop to human sacrifice, we have no men in our Presidency who can.'¹⁷

Within a few months Lord Dalhousie arrived. The whole country was tranquil except that of the Khond territory where Dalhousie saw a "little war going on" "against the Rajah of Ungool."¹⁸ The state of Ungool (or Angul) was not very far from Goomsur, though separated from it by the states of Baud and Daspalla. The raja was Hindu, but had a Khond population under him. Ill disposed towards the British, he was said to have employed every possible means to excite disturbances in Goomsur and Baud.¹⁹ During the rising in Goomsur, he actually crossed the Mahanadi with guns and troops plundering and burning the country, and the impression soon became universal among the Khonds that the raja of Angul was in open hostility to the government and would speedily come to their assistance.²⁰ This led Campbell to march against the raja.

Within a few days of operation the raja surrendered, and Dalhousie informed Home, "Our little war in Ungool is at an end. Col. Campbell met with no opposition. He found preparations for resistance but encountered none. . . ."²¹ The raja was taken a prisoner and for the time it became a problem for the Governor-General how "to dispose of his country", and for some time he thought

¹⁷ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 854, Tweeddale to Hobhouse, 14 April and 9 July 1847.

¹⁸ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. i, Dalhousie to Tucker, 22 January 1848.

¹⁹ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 14, Report of Macpherson, 27 December 1846.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Extract from Letter of Lt. Haughton, 6 April 1847.

²¹ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. i, Dalhousie to Tucker, 8 February 1848.

that "It is not worth the taking...."²² It occurred to him that the old raja should be kept in safe custody and his son, who had fled to the British some time ago, should be placed on the throne, under stringent conditions and making payment of the expenses of the expedition from the territory. But ultimately he decided for its annexation to make it a base for operation against the Khonds. "...We have a perfect right to do with it what we please", declared Dalhousie, "It has been justly forfeited and no one could whisper a complaint if we turned out the whole lot and took it to ourselves. And there can be no doubt that the example among those wild and recusant tribes would be most salutary, and strengthen greatly the hands of the Government in effecting the suppression of the barbarous rites they practise against which the Government has officially and repeatedly declared unmitigated and lasting hostility."²³

Beyond Angul lay the hill state of Baud and Campbell was directed to march into it. Within a month, 58 meriahs were rescued through the untiring exertions and judicious measures of the assistant agent Lt. MacVicar, and 11 were delivered to Campbell himself. "I lost no opportunity of clearly and forcibly explaining to them the firm intention of the Government to put an end to the sacrifice of human victims", said Campbell from Baud.²⁴ From the principal chiefs he took a written agreement to refrain from the sacrifice and from the chiefs of villages a declaration to the same purport holding his sword, as practised by him with excellent effect many years ago among the Khonds of Goomsur. He was

²² *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. i, Dalhousie to Tucker, 8 February 1848.

²³ *Ibid.*, 21 February 1848.

²⁴ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 13, Report from Agent, 25 March 1848.

grieved to hear that just a little while before his arrival two meriahs were sacrificed in the very *mootah* (Khond district) of Jehlingia where he proclaimed the determination of the government, but trusted that "the last public sacrifice has been performed in Baud though a generation or more must pass away under a strict surveillance before the inclination for the abominable though cherished rite is eradicated from the hearts of the Khonds."²⁵

Wherever he went, the Khonds employed the "same stratagems, deceit and procrastination" to evade the delivery of the meriahs, but Campbell was helped by the Hindu chiefs of those tracts who generally brought the victims to him. The rescued meriahs were all taken under the British protection. Simultaneous with his campaign against the Khonds, Campbell carried on operations against Chokro Bissye, the leader of the anti-British movement in the hill tracts of Orissa. He was pressed by several parties in pursuit of him and being forced to leave Baud, took refuge in the zamindari of Sonpur. The British were prepared to identify his movement with the discontent among the Khonds, and Campbell thought that the rebel's promises of securing the continuance of the meriah sacrifice was the bond by which he maintained his influence with the Khonds, but that being broken by military operations, his influence was considered to be at an end.²⁶

Dalhousie regarded the exploits of Campbell as a "great success".²⁷ He informed the President, "Colonel Campbell who went on from Angool to Boad and towards the Goomsur countries has met with no opposition. The meriahs seized for sacrifice are being surrendered to us in

²⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 13, Report from Agent, 25 March 1848.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 April 1848.

²⁷ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. i, 8 April 1848.

considerable numbers, and Chokro Bissey, hunted from hill to valley, has now taken refuge in the wild tracts behind Boad, marked 'unexplored' in the maps, and his followers dispersed. At present he is inaccessible, but we shall catch him some day."²⁸

In his campaigns Campbell had to suffer much hardship. The heat of the weather was terrific, and considerable amount of sickness occurred among the field force. His force visited regions on which, it was said, "the foot of a European had never before trod."²⁹ His hardship bore fruit, and when the operations were brought to a close in Baud, Dalhousie saw that all the chiefs, excepting Chokro Bissye, who had fled to the jungles, had come in, given their submission, and sworn their most solemn oath that they would abstain from the meriah sacrifice. "Of the sufficiency of this oath time only can give proof", said the Governor-General, "but this practical and pleasing result has at all events been accomplished that they have delivered up two hundred and thirty-five victims preparing for sacrifice in different parts and placed them in Col. Campbell's powers."³⁰ The whole was so well done by Campbell that, as Dalhousie said to the directors, he "deserves and shall receive all the praise I can give him."³¹

The rescued meriahs, men, women and children, gave Campbell much anxiety. He thought of establishing a village or villages for their settlement. He got a few meriah men and women married and gave them the choice to live in any neighbouring village of their own

²⁸ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 855, f. 18, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 8.4.1848.

²⁹ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 2 June 1848.

³⁰ *Home Misc: B.P.*, vol. 855, f. 37, Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 2 May 1848.

³¹ *D.P.*, Letters to Court of Directors, vol. i, 1 May 1848.

selection receiving Rs. 3-8 a month in lieu of their provisions. He drafted twenty-five promising lads into the sebundy corps of the government. The large number of meriah girls proved themselves to be very unmanageable, but they were made to pound rice and prepare their food which kept them employed.³² The government, at the suggestion of Campbell, authorised the medical officer at Russellkonda to be placed in charge of the rescued meriahs, and further sanctioned the erection of a hospital and dispensary at the above place.³³

When the question of the meriah children was put before Dalhousie, he decided that they "must be cared for by the Government until they are able to provide for themselves." He thought it neither desirable nor practicable to restore them to persons of their own family or their own tribe. He also thought it highly objectionable to constitute them a separate meriah colony settled in one place and encouraged to intermarry, for, as he said, "it would perpetuate in their own minds the memory of their separation, and serve to keep alive in the minds of the population the recollection of a rite of which we wish to obliterate every trace."³⁴

The Christian missionaries at Berhampur, Cuttack and Balasore were willing to take the children under their care. But Dalhousie thought that this might lead to misrepresentation. He was inclined, however, to leave some of them to the charge of the missionaries or of other persons whose care of the children might be open to inspection. About their future, it was decided by him that they "should be brought up to provide for them-

³² *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 13, Report of Agent, 19 April 1848. (Of the 235 meriahs, 134 were males and 101 females).

³³ *Ibid.*, from Government of India to Agent, 20 May 1848.

³⁴ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. i, 7 June 1848.

selves in the ordinary pursuits of the country, both boys and girls. The former might be started in the world with a pair of bullocks, and the latter receive a small sum of money as a dowry on marriage."³⁵ He made it clear that in no case should they be led to suppose themselves as permanent pensioners on government.

The meriah children, who had been kept by the Khonds in a most degrading state, on their rescue, proved themselves to be something abnormal in their behaviour and work. Campbell had to give special attention to this. He said, "The meriah girls at Suradah are giving much trouble, and becoming very clamorous. I am using my best endeavours to get them suitably settled. The large crowd at Nawagaum are most difficult to manage. They constantly quarrel amongst themselves, and run away but generally have either returned or been brought back. They are impatient of all restraint, and it appears to me an advisable measure to lessen the number at Nawagaum by placing a portion of them at Aska."³⁶

The achievement of Campbell in Goomsur, Angul and Baud having been "most satisfactory", the Court of Directors hoped that "an end will be put to those horrid human sacrifices among the Khonds" in the entire hill tracts.³⁷ Adjacent to Goomsur and Baud lay the biggest Khond territory, China Kimedi. In the summer of 1848 Col. Campbell was busy using every means "to obtain as accurate and complete information as is possible with reference to China Kimedy, and its hill tribes." The country abounded with steep and difficult ghats and the

³⁵ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. i, 7 June 1848.

³⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 13, Report from Agent, 10 June 1848.

³⁷ *D.P.*, Letters from Court of Directors, vol. i, Lashington to Dalhousie, 24 June 1848.

people there were universally reported to be of a ferocious and intractable disposition. It was decided to begin operations there at the end of the rains.³⁸ Dalhousie authorised Campbell to annex the above-named tract to the jurisdiction of his agency.³⁹

Before the operations began Dalhousie once again declared the Government's "firm determination to put an end to the observance" "without swerving and with steady perseverance." He asked Campbell to avoid a little war and to try every method of persuasion, before he had recourse to force. But at the same time instructed him that all his persuasions should be supported by the near neighbourhood of a military force, and he should carefully avoid exposing himself even to temporary discomfiture by employing with him a force not sufficiently strong for every purpose.⁴⁰ The Government of Madras was directed to despatch four companies of regular infantry from the northern division of its army for service in China Kimedi,⁴¹ and Col. Campbell was advised, if the employment of arms became unavoidable, to make the operations so decisive as to prevent the possibility of a protracted struggle.⁴²

Dalhousie's policy towards the Hindu chiefs of the hill states, in respect of meriah, was one of conciliation as well as firmness. In consideration of services rendered by the raja of Baud in the cause of meriah suppression, he, on the recommendation of Col. Campbell, gave him a reward of an elephant and a horse valued at about eight hundred rupees.⁴³ But when the raja permitted

³⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 13, Report from Agent, 24 June 1848.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Govt. of India to Campbell, 22 July 1848.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Minute by Governor-General, 2 August 1848.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, from Govt. of India to Govt. of Fort St. George, 12 Aug. 1848.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Govt. of India to Campbell, 12 August 1848.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 22 July 1848.

Chokro Bissye to remain in his country the Governor-General threatened him with a fine of three thousand rupees unless he drove him "out of his country not to return again". The rani of Sonpur was also warned that "if her officers give countenance to the rebel, or if he is permitted to enter her country, she shall be fined Rs. 2000|".⁴⁴ Before operations commenced in China Kimedi, its raja was called for an interview with Campbell at Chhatrapur where "he consented to co-operate as far as lay in his power" and to prepare the way for the operations, and to put his *maliah* sirdar and a party of *paiks* at the disposal of the agent.⁴⁵ The fate of the ex-raja of Angul served as a lesson to other hill rajas. The ex-raja, an old man, was made a state prisoner for life, and confined at Hazaribagh, at which place the Ameers of Sind were kept. His country was resumed by the government and his eldest son was pensioned and not allowed to reside nearer his old home than Cuttack.⁴⁶

In November 1848, Campbell entered into China Kimedi through Surada. The annual sacrificing season was at hand. Intelligence reached him that a "large massacre" had been resolved on. "I hastened onwards, and my sudden, though not altogether unexpected, appearance stayed the murderous proceedings." Campbell took the extremest caution among those wild and warlike race. "I was sensible", he said, "that a false step might plunge me into war, and horrible indeed would warfare have been in these dense forests and unknown mountains, where the climate was not the least

⁴⁴ *I.H.C.*, Campbell to Govt., 8 August 1848 and Govt. to Campbell, 26 August 1848.

⁴⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 14, Report from Agent, 26 August 1848.

⁴⁶ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 20 December 1848.

deadly of the foes we should have had to contend against."⁴⁷

Raja Adikand Deo of China Kimedi, and the tataraja Raghat Deo of Gaddapur, offered their active co-operation, but Campbell, "purposely avoided placing these Rajahs at any time in antagonism to their hill subjects." He followed his invariable course of employing an intermediate agency as little as possible and from the first openly and in the most plain and intelligible manner proclaimed the chief reason of his appearance among them. "Without any design or circumlocution I told them that the Government had sent me for the sole and avowed purpose of putting an end for ever to the inhuman and barbarous murders yearly perpetrated by them, and if needful, enforce the cession of all the victims held in possession...."⁴⁸

The result was that daily, and almost hourly, the wild mountaineers of China Kimedi assembled in his camp, and before the close of that season two hundred and six victims were rescued. No doubt, a few sacrifices took place and some meriahs were hidden or carried to a distant part of the country, but Campbell hoped to rescue them in the next season.⁴⁹

In China Kimedi he discovered a peculiarity in the manner of performing the sacrifice, the victims being slain before the rude image of an elephant round which they had been previously dragged, with loud shouts and the beating of drums. These images were "found in almost every village" and Campbell "caused the inhabi-

⁴⁷ *R.M.A.*, p. 31, Campbell to Govt. of India, 17 March 1849.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33, Campbell to Govt. of India, 17 March 1849.

tants to destroy them as a proof of their sincerity in abandoning the sacrifice.”⁵⁰

Here he made very minute enquiries respecting the price paid for meriahs, and found that “they cost from 25 to 40 gunties each according to circumstances. A buffalo, bullock, pig, goat, a brass pot being each reckoned a guntie. Thus when the bargain is struck for 25 gunties five of each of the named animals and brass pots are paid which at the low valuation of 4 rupees for each buffalo and bullock, 2 rupees for each pig, 1 rupee for each goat and $\frac{1}{2}$ rupee for each brass vessel would give the value of Rs. 62-8-0 as the lowest price of a meriah....” “I have no doubt”, said Campbell, “that the great price which the meriahs cost has given rise to the practice general in the districts of Subernagherry, Jedoomboo and Bunduree of purchasing females who having promiscuous intercourse with the youngmen of the village their children of unknown fathers are considered meriahs and in due time sacrificed. The same miserable fate awaits the wretched woman when she ceases to bear children.”⁵¹

By March 1849, Campbell informed the government that the total number of meriahs rescued that year was 307 making an aggregate of 547 in the two past seasons. One hundred and eighty-four miles of new routes never before traversed by Europeans were surveyed that season in the Khond country.⁵²

But his work was cut short in the summer on account of ill health. His assistant Captain MacVicar suffered from a “most severe and dangerous attack of jungle fever” and his medical attendant ordered him to go with as little delay as possible to the Cape or most probably to Europe

⁵⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 21, Report from Agent, 16 December, 1848.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 23 December 1848.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 17 March 1849.

for the recovery of his health. Out of 12 officers who were on service with Campbell in 1847-48, 2 had died of fever immediately on leaving the hills, 4 were sent to Europe on sick certificate, 3 were sent to sea and elsewhere, one retired from the service, and by May 1849 only two were present with the regiment.⁵³ Finally Campbell himself fell a victim and had to resign his appointment for embarkation to Europe. He said to Halliday "Though my health has been very precarious for some time past I indulged the hope that with care I could hold out another season, and at least complete the work of meriah suppression in Chinna Kimedy so happily begun. But I have been obliged most reluctantly to give in. No constitution can long withstand the baneful effect of the climate of these hills."⁵⁴

The government had every reason to be satisfied with the progress of Campbell's work, and it had to grant him leave. But personally Dalhousie became "very sorry" "to lose Col. Campbell" from his duty.⁵⁵

On the departure of Col. Campbell, his assistant Lt. Frye was ordered to conduct the duties of the agency. Frye was believed to be highly qualified for the task. He had passed the examination in three languages, Hindustani, Oriya and Telegu,⁵⁶ and, therefore, was able to establish better contact with the people. Since April 1848, he engaged himself in reducing the Khond dialect to a written form and made satisfactory progress within a year.⁵⁷ This achievement was something remarkable

⁵³ *I.H.C.*, 2 May 1849.

⁵⁴ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 22, Campbell to Halliday, 31 May 1849.

⁵⁵ *D.P.*, Letters to Presidency, Dalhousie to Littler, 6 July 1849.

⁵⁶ *F.I.*, 8 March 1849.

⁵⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 13, Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, 4 April 1848, and *F.I.*, 8 March 1849.

and was perhaps the first attempt to know the language of the Khonds. Within a short time he was able to employ "the Khond language as extensively as possible". The bonds of security and engagements to abolish the sacrifice taken from the Khonds were invariably expressed in that language and in the simplest terms.⁵⁸

At the initial stage of his campaign Frye could not achieve great success. Chokro Bissye was still in arms and gave the British much trouble. All attempts of Campbell had failed to bring him to submission. He continued to arm the people of Goomsur and incite the people of Baud to rebel. He circulated invitations to the discontented *paiks* of surrounding zamindaries to join him, and endeavoured "to excite the Boad tribes to resume their former system of making plundering attacks on the more peaceable and well disposed of the Goomsur tribes." The Governor-General in Council was inclined to offer terms to the rebel leader that if he surrendered himself without delay, his life should be spared. Failing to gain any result, the government did its best to isolate Chokro Bissye from the chiefs of Baud and Sonpur. At one time Campbell became hopeful that Chokro Bissye would surrender to Colonel Ouseley through the Sonpur rani, or that he would be captured by the zamindars of Baud and delivered to him. When such accounts reached Calcutta, Campbell received the reply: "The Governor-General in Council will have with pleasure that your expectations of the early surrender of Chokro Bissye have been realised."

Chokro Bissye, however, did not surrender. When Campbell left the agency, and J. P. Frye took over charge, he complained in November 1849 from Russell-

⁵⁸ I.H.C., 187|vol. 27, J. P. Frye to Govt. 22 December 1849.

konda that the chiefs of the Khonds who bound themselves down before Col. Campbell to be faithful to the government, went over to Chokro Bissy again, who promised to "re-establish the meriah sacrifice", and therefore the Khonds prepared to take up arms.⁵⁹ But Frye continued to work with patience and determination.

No less was the determination of Lord Dalhousie. There were people like G. E. Russell and Henry Pottinger who were disposed to think that "the work of suppression is less advanced than Col. Campbell supposes it to be." To them Dalhousie's answer was that "... much good has been done; and the much that has already been attained should encourage the Government to redouble the exertions which it was its duty to make, for the destruction of these abominable rites and practices."⁶⁰

The Governor-General decided that the agency should be maintained on a better scale of allowances so that the government would be able "to command the services of men of high character and qualifications." There were some suggestions to place the agency under the authority of the Government of Madras, but Dalhousie objected to it, and kept it under the supreme government as it then was. So far, the agent, besides duty of campaign against the meriah, was also vested with revenue or judicial functions. But Dalhousie said, "If the possession of revenue powers of the Agent has any direct effect, I conceive that the effect will be an injurious one. It cannot add to the authority of the Agent among a people who do not pay revenue to the British government at all; while on the other hand it

⁵⁹ *I.H.C.*, 187/vol. 25, Frye to Halliday, 13 November 1849.

⁶⁰ *D.P.*, Governor-General's Minutes, vol. iv, 5 January 1850.

may possibly give a colour to the suspicion the Khonds are said to entertain, that in our negotiations or our interference with them through the medium of the Agent, we have other objects in view than the suppression of sacrifices, and are actuated by other feelings than motives of pure humanity.”⁶¹ According to the desire of the Governor-General the revenue power of the agent was nullified.

In view of an extensive campaign, Dalhousie wanted to enlist the support of the Nagpur raja in whose territory and its adjacent areas the hill tribes practised meriah. He directed the officers of the agency to point out the manner in which the raja's local officers could render effective aid.⁶²

Lord Dalhousie's determination against human sacrifice is known from an interesting page in his diary, (see Appendix K). In June 1850, he was touring the wild areas of the Punjab where in the “mountain stronghold” of a hill chieftain he came across a sacred place where “not very many years ago” human sacrifices were offered, and heard the frightful tales of the scenes which were still acted there. He said, “the last stage of the endurance of such horrors has been reached, and that in this and other hill states tributary to us, the sacrifice will soon for ever cease, if it has not ceased already.”⁶³

Lt. Frye in the meantime carried on his operation in the *maliahs* of China Kimedi which according to survey was upwards of 200 miles in length by 70 or 80 in breadth, and this distance being increased by the nature of a country destitute of roads and beset with beds of torrents, stony paths, and unopened forest, bidding

⁶¹ D.P., Governor-General's Minutes, vol. iv, 5 January 1850.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Diary of Dalhousie*, 1850, part ii, Camp Feranda, 23 June 1850.

defiance to rapidity of movement.⁶⁴ Yet he, accompanied by young Ricketts, went almost as far as Nagpur and recovered 290 victims. It was said that "No two men in the service could indeed be better fitted for the work, as their whole soul is in the undertaking...."⁶⁵

In August 1850 Captain MacVicar returned from the Cape of Good Hope and got ready to resume his work in the Orissa agency. He saw that consequent upon the absence of Col. Campbell and himself, and upon the necessity of Lt. Frye's confining his exertions to China Kimedi, the Baud and Goomsur hills had remained unvisited since the beginning of 1849. It became a matter of great importance for him that the tribes inhabiting those tracts be visited as early as practicable to prevent the possibility of any false impression arising out of their protracted absence. Side by side, he wanted to extend the area of his operation as widely as possible, and proposed to move towards the Kalahandi state. "The Zamindari of Kalahandi is more wild than that of China Kimedy, and it is reported to be about 100 miles in length and to comprise two large districts, Mudanpore and the extensive country of Tooamoold. As in the Mudanpore so in Tooamoold human sacrifices are slain, large number of victims are still offered to their sanguinary deity, and when it is remembered that these districts form part of the frontier of China Kimedy it becomes an object of special importance to make some prompt demonstration there", said MacVicar.⁶⁶

Kalahandi, like Baud and China Kimedi, was ruled by a Hindu chief, who, it was said, had made partial

⁶⁴ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 30, Report from Agent, 13 August 1850.

⁶⁵ *Allen's Indian Mail*, 2 April 1850.

⁶⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 31, Report from Agent, 7 October 1850.

efforts at various periods to check sacrifices. At times the court of Nagpur, too, had interfered. But their attempts had not been successful, and MacVicar said that no "complete extinction of this odious practice can ever be hoped for from any native agency."⁶⁷

On his way from Baud to Kalahandi, Captain MacVicar intended to pass through the Maji Deso and Patna countries. Patna ran parallel with the western face of Baud. It contained twelve divisions, in eight of which the meriah was abolished, while in the remaining four it still continued to be performed.⁶⁸ Below China Kimedi, in the state of Jeypore, the condition was worse. Lt. Frye complained from the former place that not ten miles from his camp in the Jeypore territory sacrifices were going on. The Khonds of China Kimedi, though could not sacrifice their own victims, secretly brought the meriah flesh from Jeypore and Kalahandi. Thus, as MacVicar felt, the work at one place "can never be deemed complete until the axe has been laid to the root of the evil" everywhere.⁶⁹

Accordingly, he wrote to the government, "The more widely our operations are extended, the sooner will the sacrifice cease and the objects of the Government be finally secured. The larger surface we cover, the better for us in every respect; for there can then be no mistake in regard to the unalterable resolution of the Government of India, to penetrate wherever the meriah sacrifice obtains and to stay the evil."⁷⁰ He requested for permission to call in the rajas of Kalahandi and Nagpur to come to his aid.

⁶⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 31, Report from Agent, 7 October 1850.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 December 1850.

⁷⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 33, Report from Agent, 4 December 1850.

With the above purpose, MacVicar launched a vigorous campaign in the winter season of 1850-51 in and around China Kimedi. His operations were brought to a favourable conclusion in Maji Deso where meriahs were surrendered, and the Khond leaders to a man, were made to swear "to abstain hence forward from immolating human beings."⁷¹ In the Patna state, he reaped the first fruits of his labour when twenty-seven meriahs were handed over to him. "The people are now convinced of our firm resolution not to leave the country until our purpose is effected", said MacVicar.⁷²

From Patna he entered into Kalahandi and travelled over a considerable portion of the low country and made strict enquiries. He conversed, as he said, with almost all the chiefs and was happy to know that in that part of the hill tracts the practice was already at an end.⁷³

From there he passed on to Taparungah where the chiefs assembled to meet him and gave up fourteen victims. Here he discovered yet another mode of sacrificing the victims. "On the day of sacrifice after the appointed ceremonies the meriah is surrounded by the Khonds, who beat him violently on the head with the heavy metal bangles which they purchase at the fairs and wear on these occasions. If this inhuman smashing does not immediately destroy the victim's life, an end is put to his sufferings by strangulation, a slit bamboo being used for that purpose. Strips of flesh are then cut off the back, and each recipient of the precious treasure carries his portion to the stream which waters his fields, and there suspends it on a pole."⁷⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, 30 December 1850.

² *Ibid.*, 11 January 1851.

I.H.C., 187|vol. 34, Report from Agent, 22 February 1851.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 March 1851.

In the course of his operations, Captain MacVicar felt the necessity of two things to bring the light of civilisation into those uncivilised tracts. There were no roads into the Khond countries and on account of this the influence of the outside world could not penetrate into them. MacVicar convinced the government of the advantages of roads, and obtained permission "to commence at once upon the construction".⁷⁵ His other attempt was to establish schools for the children of the hill tribes. It is among the tribes of upper Goonsur that he made his first attempts to establish village schools. The opposition was intense and MacVicar felt that in the "progress of unfortunate humanity good at first appears an evil to be resisted if needs be to the death." "The old men recollected ancient traditions warning them against book learning, and they foretold gloomy things" if the "schools were set afloat." But MacVicar tried his best to bring them to reason. He showed them a smart intelligent Khond youth, a rescued meriah himself, and made him read to them in their own language. This pleased the old Khonds, and a few men of influence finally agreed. A school was accordingly started, shortly a second was permitted, and by April, 1851, there were four schools at work with fifty-nine scholars in them. MacVicar said, "For the rising generation this day of small things is full of promise; the old men are past hope, their spirits are inflexible, their eyes have grown dim in their old delusions and they will carry them to their funeral piles."⁷⁶

The excessive heat of the summer and the dangerous climate of the hills always went against the health of

⁷⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 31, Govt. of India to Agent, 15 November 1850.

⁷⁶ *F.I.*, 30 January 1851, and *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 35, Report from Agent, 26 April 1851.

the European officers. Captain Frye was taken by severe illness in June and proceeded to Europe; and Captain MacVicar was compelled to apply for leave in July on account of continued ill health.⁷⁷ Before his departure the latter briefly summarised the result of his labour as follows. "In the hitherto unvisited districts of Maji Deso, Pedda Kimeddy, and the remote hills of Kalahandi, the foundation of the suppression of the meriah sacrifice has been laid, our intercourse has been renewed with the Khonds of Goomsur and Boad and the work consolidated, schools have been established in Upper Goomsur and a road commenced from Konjeur to Sohanpore, great progress has been effected in the extensive tracts of China Kimeddy which have been thoroughly searched, six hundred and seventeen victims have been rescued and a brief visit has been paid to Souradah where an interview was held with the infanticidal tribes."⁷⁸

MacVicar's departure was compensated by the return of Col. Campbell early in September. His attention was first drawn towards the schools. By then, seven schools had been established in the Khond mountains of Goomsur, and though the number of pupils was small, the Khonds, Panwas, Gonds and other hill castes sent their children to the schools, perhaps for the first time in the history of their races. "Three of these school masters are meriahs who have been educated at the missionary schools at Berhampore and are married to meriahs brought up at the same institution", said Campbell to Halliday.⁷⁹

The principal object which he had in view, according to him, in sending meriah children to be educated by

⁷⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 36, Report from Agent, 2 June and 18 July 1851.

⁷⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 35, Report from Agent, 26 April 1851.

⁷⁹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 38, Report from Agent, 25 September 1851.

the missionaries at Berhampur, Cuttack and Balasore was the establishment of the best qualified and most promising among them in Baud, Goomsur, and China Kimedi, as teachers of the Oriya language which was spoken or understood by half or more than half the population of the Khond country.⁸⁰ In 1851-52, nearly two hundred and fifty meriah children were receiving education in the several mission schools under the patronage of the government. F. J. Mouat, secretary to the council of education in Bengal, visited the missionary school at Cuttack in which the rescued Khond victims were educated and was especially impressed to see the education of the meriah girls. He wrote in his report, "The girls' department of this school was more than usually interesting as it contained several meriahs, some nearly grown up. In addition to reading, writing, needle work in all its branches and singing, they are taught all the household duties befitting their future position in life."⁸¹ At the recommendation of the council of education, the government made a grant for Oriya school books to be distributed among meriah pupils. Col. Campbell hoped that those meriah pupils, would some day, "be the teachers of their own tribes."

The last drive against the Khonds was launched by Campbell at the beginning of 1853. The Governor-General had regretted much that the sacrifice still went on in the state of Jeypore and had hoped that the "expectation to recover the meriahs of Jeypore will be eventually realised."⁸² There were a few more hill states which now required special attention. Col. Campbell

⁸⁰ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 42, Report from Agent, 22 March 1852.

⁸¹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 48, from Council of Education to Govt. of Bengal, 11 December 1852.

⁸² *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 42, Govt. of India to Campbell, 14 May 1852.

called on the Hindu rajas of those hill states to guard their own Khonds. In January, Narrain Deo, the tat-raja of Bissam-Cuttack waited on the agent and reported that there were no meriahs in his country and that he he would be careful to prevent any of his Khonds going to any place where sacrifice was performed or to bring flesh.⁸³ Chhatrapati Deo, the raja of Loonjeegora visited Campbell and assured him that there was no meriah sacrifice or meriah remaining in his country.

Some of the small chiefs were warned for their lukewarm policy. The tat-raja of Singpoor informed Campbell that there was no sacrifice in his country, but he did not prevent his Khonds from going to a place called Ryabejee to bring meriah flesh. "This is bad", said Campbell to the raja, "as is also the Junna sacrifice (human sacrifice committed by hill rajas on some great occasions such as war), you must therefore carefully prevent the commission of these crimes, or of any of your Khonds going even to see a human sacrifice of any kind."⁸⁴

In course of a few months Col. Campbell travelled almost all over the entire Khond territory except a few remote hill pockets. He visited Bissam-Cuttack, and Nowgulbera, and from there marched towards Patna and Jorasingi. The raja of Kalahandi offered him much help, and the Hindu chiefs worked to rescue the meriahs wherever they could. Campbell was so much satisfied with the raja of Kalahandi that he wrote to C. G. Mansel the resident at Nagpur, "There is no doubt but he has done a great deal for the suppression of the Meriah sacrifice, and at no small expense, and I venture to suggest that if an appropriate honorary title and an elephant

⁸³ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 49, Report from Agent, January 1853.

⁸⁴ *L.H.C.*, 187|vol. 49, Campbell to Tat-Raja of Singpoor, 15.1.1853..

handsomely caparisoned were conferred on him either by the Nagpore Durbar or the Government of India for valuable services rendered in suppressing the cruel Meriah rite, it would be highly gratifying to him and encourage him to persevere in this work of humanity."

In most places the Khonds came to him freely and promised to give up meriah once and for all. In a few places they fled away in fear to mountains. In the China Kimedi tracts the Khonds of Toopungah made a pre-meditated and unprovoked attack upon Campbell. They were the only wild unruly sect who, though summoned on three successive seasons by the agent, refused to come or give up their meriahs. Campbell himself went to hold personal communication with them, and to persuade them to submit. But no sooner had he reached the foot of the steep and thickly wooded hill, on which several of their villages were built, than he was "received with shouts of defiance, and sounding of horns to summon the more distant members of the tribes. . . ." Within a short time they came rushing down through the jungle in several parties, yelling and shouting their war cries. Campbell had to order to fire over the nearest party as a warning. The moment the shots were discharged, they turned and fled up the mountains followed by the sebundies and the matchlock men of the Hindu chief.⁸⁵

The result of this show of force was satisfactory. The Khond chiefs of Toopungah hastened to the Hindu chief of the districts, Bahadur Pater, with one of their meriahs and entreated him to intercede with Col. Campbell for pardon "promising that they would never again oppose the will of the Sircar, nor have anything to say to the sacrifice of human beings."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ L.H.C., Report from Agent, 9 February 1853.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

From China Kimedi, Campbell made several marches in Baud, where, on account of previous operations, "the meriah sacrifice was never even spoken of", and they appeared to have entirely abandoned the rite. "They all expressed themselves delighted, with the road which had been opened to Sohanpoor, for they could now take their produce to the weekly fair at Dhoi on the plains without any difficulty or fear from thieves or tigers which they had never done before."⁸⁷

The Madras Government realised the useful effect of good roads from the coast into the heart of the uncivilised tracts and prepared at first to lay a main road from Berhampur to Russellkonda. The advantages of the proposed line were obvious. It was to increase the traffic between Nagpur and the coast and to render one of the finest portions of the Madras territories, the sugar and oil producing tracts of Goomsur and the fine soil of Khondistan, accessible. It was said that the Khond land was "capable of producing much", and the inhabitants, though savage, were "not utterly barbarous." "Their homes are constructed with great care. Their skill in cultivation is superior to much of that in the country below the Ghaut. They weave an excellent description of strong cloth, and are not averse from traffic, as is evinced by the readiness with which they take advantage of any opening to attend the markets in the country below the Ghauts", reported the Madras Government to the Government of India.⁸⁸ It was pointed out that while the revenues of the Ganjam district averaged upwards of 13 lakhs of rupees per annum, little expenditure was incurred for the improvement of its internal communications, and none whatever upon that which was most

⁸⁷ *L.H.C.*, 1 March 1853.

⁸⁸ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 51, Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, 19.3.1853.

essential for its well being, for example, the opening of the new roads from the coast into the interior. The Government of India were aware of the necessity, and in their correspondence with the Orissa agency, acknowledged the advantage of opening communications in the Khond country. It was felt that intercourse would do more than any other measure to advance the civilisation of the hill people.

The Madras Government asked for authority to make a second class road to join the above two places at a cost of rupees 68,583-4-0.⁸⁹ But the Governor-General-in-Council sanctioned "the construction of a first class road from Berhampur to Russellkonda at the estimated cost of rupees 1,42,246-8-1, and the Court's confirmation was "asked for immediately."⁹⁰ He also sanctioned an expenditure amounting to rupees 12,000 for the construction of a road from Cuttack to Angul, and prepared to give immediate sanction to the completion of the entire line by the construction of the remaining hundred and twenty miles between Angul and Sambalpur.⁹¹

Since Baud, China Kimedi, Jeypore, Kalahandi and Patna, to put in the words of Campbell, were "almost blank spaces on the map", it was tedious and toilsome on the part of the agency to trace the course and extent of the operations. Campbell ascertained that the extreme limits of the tracts within which the meriah sacrifice was known were from 19.20 to 21.30 degrees north and from 83.15 to 84.30 degrees east. But, according to him, within these limits there were several extensive districts where human sacrifice had never been practised.⁹² When Camp-

⁸⁹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 51, Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, 19.3.1853.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Govt. of India to Govt. of Madras, 13 April 1853.

⁹¹ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 50, Govt. of India to Govt. of Madras, 6 May 1853.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Report from Agent, 13 April 1853.

bell passed from Kalahandi through a considerable portion of the Khond country of the Patna state, he was satisfied to learn that "the meriah sacrifice had not, within the memory of men, existed to a greater extent, than the sacrifice of one or two victims throughout the whole country once in five or six years."

At the end of the spring operation of 1853, Campbell said, "In Patna and in Boad I consider the meriah sacrifice to have been thoroughly suppressed, and I do not hesitate to state my conviction that also in China Kimediy and in Jeypore the sacrifice is at an end."⁹³ The total number of meriahs rescued between 1846 and April 1853 was *twelve hundred and sixty*.*

Of this enormous number, only three were taken into private service, 247 females were given in marriage to eligible persons, 77 deserted, 148 died, 18 supported themselves by labour, 12 were employed in public service, 200 children were sent to missionary schools, 167 were given for adoption to persons of character, 306 were settled as ryots (cultivators), 59 were still left to be settled, and 23 were unable to work from old age, and therefore supported by the state.⁹⁴

During the winter of 1853-54, Col. Campbell, for the first time, passed through the heart of the mountain tracts of Toonmool where the Khond tribes visited him in his camp "without the slightest appearance of distrust." By the orders of the raja of Nagpur, those tribes had given up the rite, and had not sacrificed for five seasons. Reports had come to them that "the Company (they

⁹³ I.H.C., Report from Agent, 13 April 1853.

* 345 from Baud, 647 from China Kimediy, 72 from Kalahandi, 2 from Patna and 192 from Jeypore. (Though only 2 are shown from Patna, a previous report shows that 27 were handed over to MacVicar).

⁹⁴ I.H.C., 187|vol. 50, Report from Agent, 13 April 1853.

knew this mysterious name) had sent troops and a great gentleman to the Khonds of Jeypore and China Kimedy to abolish the meriah sacrifice" and "they felt disappointed that no gentleman had been sent to them." But when they saw Campbell among them, they were pleased to feel that they, too, were held in equal estimation with their brethren of other countries and solemnly bound themselves to forsake the meriah for ever.⁹⁵

On previous occasions, at many places the Khonds used to desert their villages on the approach of the officers, but in course of time they became familiar with the work of the agency. "Not one deserted village was met with or heard of nor did a single case of evasion occur throughout the whole of these extensive tracts", said Campbell during the closing days of his tour. He was very happy to see that the Khonds assembled in his camps in crowds almost as soon as he reached a place, and "with a freedom never before evinced by them" selling or exchanging with Campbell's people the produce of their fields for money, beads or pieces of cloth.

At few places the Khonds asked Campbell, "What are we to say to the deity?" And Campbell gave them a formula, "Do not be angry with us O Goddess for giving you the blood of beasts instead of human blood but vent your wrath on that gentleman who is well able to bear it, we are guiltless."⁹⁶

In February 1854, Campbell was again taken ill. His work was practically over and the Governor-General was pleased to grant him leave for Europe.⁹⁷ On his departure it was said that Campbell had been able to effect

⁹⁵ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 58, Report from Agent, 5 January 1854.

⁹⁶ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 59, Report from Agent, 9 February 1854.

⁹⁷ *I.H.C.*, 187|vol. 58, Govt. of India to Campbell, 24 February 1854.

almost entire suppression of the practice of offering human victims, "once as prevalent in Khondistan as in Carthage." The Khonds were not only dead to all sense of their crime, and confident that it was directly sanctioned by the deity, but they also lived in strongholds, which it was scarcely possible to invade. Legislation was useless among a people who were beyond the pale of law. Threats were absurd when they could not be enforced even by a campaign. Bribery was powerless when the people believed a crime to be their greatest earthly gain, and moral suasion seemed impracticable when applied to races, "who would consider a Missionary an acceptable offering to the Gods." Among such a people Campbell worked, and when his work ended "an entire people has been induced to forego a crime sanctioned alike by antiquity and by superstition." Campbell was concerned with the operations from the first. His firm gentleness made them successful in the end. "He has spent no small portion of a life away from civilisation".⁹⁸

MacVicar succeeded Campbell. He saw, as he termed it, "an entire change of feeling" among the Khonds. "They have in every place substituted animal for human sacrifices and having found the efficacy of the inferior victims just as greatly, and infinitely more economical, the suppression may be considered complete", reported MacVicar to the government.⁹⁹

But a complete vigilance over the entire area was necessary for a time. He proposed to keep Captain Frye in China Kimedi, and McNeill in Jeypore for supervision, while he himself wanted to penetrate into the hitherto unexplored countries of Bastar, Nowaguddah, and

⁹⁸ *F.I.*, 28 September 1854.

⁹⁹ *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 12, Report from Agent, 25 November 1854.

Khariāl where he suspected human sacrifice in existence. "If I am permitted to give effect to my views", said MacVicar, "I will assure the Supreme Government that provided it please God to spare our health, the work of this Agency will be completely accomplished in three seasons, including the present one. The Agency may then with safety be abolished and a zealous officer will be abundantly sufficient to watch over the tribes and lead them onward in the path of civilisation."¹⁰⁰

The government sanctioned his proposals, and MacVicar marched into new territories. The raja of Khariāl signed agreement to prevent meriah. In Nawaguddah, MacVicar received submission from its Gond raja. A proclamation was issued to the Khonds, *Gando*, *Boonjea*, *Ullaba*, *Mahara*, *Seeto*, *Paiks*, *Poojarees* and *Janis* of Nawaguddah to the same effect as elsewhere and the orders of the sircar were obeyed.¹⁰¹ The same result was effected in the dense forests of the Bastar country.

At the end of the operation during the season of 1854-55, except a few stray attempts here and there, everywhere the rite was seen to have been suspended. Satisfied with the condition, MacVicar left the agency in September 1855. Captain Frye, who had worked, as was said, "with all his heart in this cause", and was an "accomplished scholar" among the officers of the agency, died from fever.

Lord Dalhousie praised the officers who had succeeded in so difficult a task. "The nature of the country, the nature of the climate, the nature of the people, all was adverse to success. Nevertheless, the exertions of the officers to whom the duty was entrusted have been singu-

¹⁰⁰ *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 4, Report from Agent, 3 June 1854.

¹⁰¹ *I.H.C.*, 188|vol. 14, Report from Agent, November-December 1854.

larly successful", said Dalhousie. With the papers and reports of the agency in hand, he proclaimed in his last minute that "as regards the tribes which are at all subject to our influence or lie within our reach the Meriah sacrifice may be considered to be at an end."¹⁰²

But for a few years more the agency was maintained. From September 1855 until the abolition of the agency Lieutenant McNeill worked as the agent. He had to constantly visit all the tracts under his jurisdiction. In spite of stray sacrifices of a few victims, the meriah system never raised its head again. The law was applied strictly, the kidnappers of victims were caught and punished, and new meriahs were rescued, and a sharp vigilance kept.

The government had declared that "the one grand point of cessation from human sacrifice being gained, the progress towards anything further should be most cautiously made."¹⁰³ The Khonds, after the abolition of meriah, sacrificed buffaloes with all the paraphernalia of a meriah ceremony. This was permitted by the earlier agents. The Khonds, on such occasions, indulged themselves in hard drinking, and at a few places committed "secret and stealthy sacrifice of human beings by night succeeded on the following morning by the immolation of the buffalo." Nine such secret sacrifices at midnight occurred in the Goomsur Khond tracts under similar circumstances in 1855, 1857, and 1858. After a careful consideration of all these facts, McNeill considered it prudent "to prohibit the sacrifice of buffaloes on ground formerly reserved for human sacrifices, the use on such occasions of the liquor distilled from the grain called

¹⁰² *P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245, p. 39, Dalhousie's final minute, 28 February 1856.

¹⁰³ *R.M.A.*, p. 81.

'cui'ri', and the exhibition of certain emblems formerly only used when celebrating meriah sacrifices."¹⁰⁴

In December 1861, the government abolished the agency, because it was considered no longer necessary.

As has been said, the custom of human sacrifice came to the notice of the British Government rather late. But its suppression was effected as quickly as possible. The people who practised it, were uncivilised. The government at no time had felt the urgency or necessity of establishing contact with them or conquering their land. But it was the discovery of that horrible practice which brought about the British relations with the hill tribes. This resulted not only in the suppression of that crime, but in exposing those people to the influences of the outside world. Roads were constructed into the heart of the Khond countries, and schools were opened to teach their children.

A people neglected for ages, thus, got the first influences of civilisation on them. They never revived the meriah practice, and the condition of their social existence began to improve in course of time.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, from Lt. A. C. MacNeill, 22 August 1860.

CONCLUSION

These innovations and reforms resulted in an ostensible impact of Western sciences and of Western ideas upon the people of India. To them, the railway and the telegraph were like the first symbols of the sciences of the West. Western ideas had been brought earlier than our period, but they touched society only at its surface, being confined to a limited circle of the English-educated. With the scheme of popular education the same ideas could now be carried further. The humanitarian movement brought home to the people the necessity of a more rational outlook, and along with economic and technical developments prepared the way for a revolution in Indian ways of thought.

Dalhousie and his compatriots who gave a start to the manifold changes, could not have realised the full significance of their own measures and of the far reaching consequences that were to follow. In some of their innovations, their imagination could not even grasp the immediate results. For instance, to the promoters of the Indian railways, the question of the passenger traffic seemed a remote matter. The Indians were said to have been too superstitious to avail themselves of a western mode of travelling. Dalhousie, who was more sanguine in his anticipations than most of his contemporaries, was himself not sure. But from its very opening the railways attracted millions, who, irrespective of caste and creed, travelled together.* The telegraphs, which were institu-

* In 1867-68, the total number of railway passengers was 13,746,000 of whom 95 per cent. travelled in third class.

ted primarily for administrative purposes, soon became a matter of public utility, and a decade after their opening, it was said, "...although the telegraph in India was originally established for the purposes of speedy communication between different military stations, it is now looked upon almost in the light of a post-office."¹

In the case of some other measures, though the reformers anticipated the result of the changes they were bringing, the totality of their effect was perhaps beyond their comprehension. Whatever results might have been expected of a cheap postage or a system of popular education in the middle of the nineteenth century it was difficult to estimate their role in uniting and modernising India. But it must not be forgotten that behind all the measures, the predominant idea of Dalhousie and his advisers was to bring about an improvement. Some years were to elapse until the real nature of those improvements could be properly realised.

The total effect of the changes brought about during 1848-56 contributed to the development, besides other things, of a changed economy, a new social outlook, and finally a concept of national unity. Prior to the speedy means of communication, the economy of different parts of India remained localised and isolated. The railway, telegraph and post broke down this isolation. Some critics have pointed out that the railways destroyed the indigenous industries of India by bringing cheap machine-made goods of foreign origin. But as a matter of fact, the coming of the machine-made goods to the Indian markets began long before the railways were introduced. If the indigenous industries were adversely affected by the railways, that is because, as it is said, the decay of peasant

¹ Report from Select Committee on East India Communications, 1866, (London, 1866), p. xiii.

arts is a problem met with in every country that has been touched by the industrial revolution, and in India, it is the railways which brought about the industrial age. To mention a few, the railways helped mobilising the local products of different parts of the country for distant markets, commercialising agriculture, and opening up of and developing the coal industry, the cotton and jute mill industries etc.

The beginning of this new economic era, which quickly followed the speedy means of transport and communication, also fostered the growth of a new middle class. The traders and merchants, urban businessmen and small dealers between villages and towns, besides the growing industrial class, were the first to take advantage of the telegraph and the post. To the vast masses of the people the economic benefits of the railway and telegraph were of little consequence, but to the rising middle class their advantages were apparent. The size of this class grew as the railways and other communications expanded, and their commercial activities increased proportionately.

Another economic result of the new means of communication was the growth of the urban areas. While the new industrial areas developed into small and big towns, the activities in the old ones increased considerably. Mobilisation of labour from rural areas could be possible on account of the means of communication. The village products made their way to the town and *vice versa*. The static village economy was beginning to break.

Thus while the economic measures to modernise India helped to create a rapidly growing middle class, with the growth of its economic prosperity, it is this class which began to develop a changed social outlook. The English education so far was confined to a small circle

of upper class people. Whatever might have been the influence of that education on them, the vast majority of people were not influenced by new ideas. The Thomasonian system of vernacular education aimed at bringing the knowledge of a little arithmetic, geometry, history, geography and other similar subjects to the people at large in their indigenous tongues. But the mass of people showed indifference to any scheme of education. They were too poor to pay the school fees however negligible the amount was or to spare their children from domestic and other works, and too apathetic to develop a desire for learning. But the new system was suitable to the needs of the children of the village headmen, shopkeepers, accountants, money-lenders, servants of the zamindars, measurers and small landholders etc. In the changing economy, it was these people in rural areas and the traders and businessmen in towns, who immediately appreciated the value of government education. For various reasons, the main being the social structure of the Hindus which positively discouraged the low caste people from sending their children to schools, general education in India hardly went beyond the middle class. But among the middle class, the spread of education not only developed self-consciousness but created an intelligentsia with liberal ideas.

This was possible because the economic means of the middle class enabled them to send their children for higher education. The benefits of English education were extended from the universities to the innumerable secondary schools to which a certain proportion of the middle class children could go. However small the percentage of these educated men might have been, they played a considerable part in turning their countrymen towards a new way of life.

As a result, such customs as sati and infanticide quickly became memories of the past. The superstitions of ages were eradicated both by government regulations and by a changed mentality of the people. The humanitarian movement in favour of ameliorating the condition of the Indian women which became so prominent during the time of Dalhousie, received rather less attention after the Mutiny from the authorities. But if the government became cautious in its treatment of social problems, the trend was maintained by the educated class. It has been seen that when Bethune launched his campaign in favour of female education in Bengal, he was met with bigoted opposition from the conservative sections of society. Such opposition was seldom seen again. Female education, as such, made very little progress. The evils of child marriage, the indifference of parents to the education of their daughters, and the system of purdah stood as the main obstacles on its way. But in spite of them, it began to make slow progress among the urban population and spread its influence into the rural areas. Whatever result was accomplished, it was due in the beginning to the movement by Bethune and Dalhousie and to the subsequent concern of the educated Indians. The coming of the Western ideas into the zenana had even a greater force in breaking down social conservatism, than their influence over the male population.

The most far-reaching result of the mid-nineteenth century innovations was that they marked the beginning of a new concept of national unity. Dalhousie had completed the political unity of India. The administrative unity of the country became more settled on account of his measures, especially the introduction of telegraph and post. Among the intelligentsia, a linguistic unity was being slowly effected by the spread of English education.

Yet in the middle of the nineteenth century the concept of modern nationalism was unknown to the Indian mind. The difference of language among different peoples and enormous distances between one part of the country and the other hindered the growth of any idea of national unity.

But the new innovations brought about completely changed situations. No three things could have worked faster than the railway, the telegraph and the modern post in assimilating a diverse population.

To understand the role of these means of communication, one has to take into account the conditions of Indian society before the changes. Habituated to a static social existence, the people of all parts were hardly interested in what happened immediately outside their own locality. Journeys from one place to another and contacts between villages and towns were rare. With immense difficulties pilgrimages were undertaken but the number of pilgrims was small. It was a common feature in those days that when the extremely religious minded undertook a pilgrimage, he used to bid good-bye to his family and relatives with the feeling that his return was doubtful. In the absence of quick means of communication exchanges of ideas and intercourse among the people of different parts took place on a small scale.

But, when within ten years of Dalhousie's time, millions of passengers began to travel in the railway carriages, two things became apparent. One, that the isolation of different parts of the country could no longer be maintained, and next, that a liberal tendency inside society began to develop. For the first time the Brahmins and the Sudras sat side by side, touched each other and talked freely when they travelled in the same railway

compartment. The desire to travel and see was stimulated, and movement between villages and towns became frequent.

The telegraphic communication quickly brought all the important centres of India into a close touch with each other. Seven years after Dalhousie's time, India possessed nearly 12,000 miles of telegraph line and within the next five years it increased to nearly 29,000 miles. Among the urban intelligentsia and the business class, the rapidity of contact encouraged the growth of a community of interests, which ultimately led to a greater sense of unity. The cheap post, which Dalhousie instituted, grew into gigantic dimensions establishing connection among all parts of the country. Since a letter could travel to any distance for half an anna, the advantage of correspondence was within the reach of the poorest. From this single measure all classes benefited.

These changes with the spread of education brought home to many the idea of a united India. Within twenty-five years of the Dalhousie administration, when his measures had made a fair progress, one of the delegates to the first session of the Indian National Congress could say, "The progress of education throughout the different provinces of the Indian Empire is so great, and the facilities for intercommunication so various, that we, who were hitherto strangers to each other as the Sikhs, the Mahrattas, the Bengalees and the Madrasees, consider ourselves as one people with the same grievances, and with the same aspirations."²

The measures of Dalhousie came under vigorous criticism during and after the Mutiny. To many, the Western innovations appeared as one of the main causes

² Reports of Indian National Congress, 1885, p. 37.

of the rising. It was known that the Home authorities were not very anxious for the changes. They understood the necessity of railways in India, but wanted to proceed slowly with the matter. Their sanction for the telegraph and the cheap postage was almost extracted from them. Their policy towards female education was timid and reluctant. On the other hand, the demand for radical changes seldom came from the mass of Indian people. They were passive and conservative. The benefits of the Western science were almost beyond their imagination. In case of vast majority of people, the ideas of female education and other social developments were, to a considerable extent, forced upon them. It is only in some parts of the country that they showed a desire for education in their mother tongues, but besides that, the rest of the things they got almost unaware. Of course, those who understood the value of new ideas from the beginning, and helped and encouraged the government to initiate them, constituted a very small section of the society.

Thus, those who interpreted the new ideas as the cause of the Mutiny, held Dalhousie and his supporters responsible for it. To them, it seemed, Dalhousie brought about the changes hastily, in opposition to the more judicious and cautious policy of the Home authorities, and imposed upon the people against their will. The controversies over his works continued and Dalhousie died without trying to defend or justify himself.

Some observations may be made in justification of the Dalhousie policy. The authorities in London, on account of the distance which separated them from their subjects, were slow to initiate any change unless the urgency was conveyed to them by their servants in India. If Dalhousie suggested the changes and carried them out,

he perhaps felt their necessity more than the directors of the East India Company did. Desire for scientific or social change hardly originated among the people at large, especially during the first three quarters of the last century. To have postponed the changes until the majority of people demanded them, would have meant their postponement indefinitely.

In consideration of the above two factors, Dalhousie's radicalism deserves praise. His scientific innovations were so strange by themselves that at any time during the nineteenth century their introduction into India more or less would have surprised the people, as it did even in Western countries. To have adopted a timid policy on that account would have been detrimental to India's rate of progress. India could not have been isolated from all technical and social development. While Dalhousie's progressive mind realised the urgency of such changes, his strength of character took into consideration neither the caution of the authorities at England nor the conservatism of the people in India.

Elsewhere in this work, the opinions of the English historians of the Mutiny against Dalhousie's measures have been cited. According to most of them India was too medieval to appreciate the benefits of modern science and too conservative to comprehend social reforms and therefore the Mutiny came as a positive manifestation of the popular antipathy towards progress. But facts do not support such presumptions. It so happened that the revolution followed an era of new innovations. But it would be difficult to argue that it would not have occurred had the railways or telegraph not been introduced. No historian of the Sepoy War perhaps could have said so. The military and political grievances were themselves enough for the outbreak of the Mutiny. The social griev-

ances have rather been exaggerated or their significance over-emphasised. The railway and telegraph were the most novel among the innovations, and therefore, condemned by the critics as a potential cause of the Mutiny. By 1857, the steam engines were operating over only a few miles in Bengal, Bombay and Madras where the people saw and used them. But at none of these places did the civil population in fact join the rising. On the other hand, as we have shown elsewhere, the people received it with great pleasure from the beginning. The telegraph wire was pulled down at some places by the sepoys, but that in itself was no proof of a popular hatred towards it. As has been seen, thousands of miles of wire was in operation for more than three years before 1857, people used them everywhere, and there was no attempt at wilful injury anywhere in India or Burma. The reports of O'Shaughnessy and the telegraph returns gave evidence of the popular sympathy towards it. The rapid expansion of railways and telegraph immediately after the Mutiny and their immense popularity everywhere falsify the theory of Indian antipathy towards them.

The encouragement of female education drew uncharitable comments. But it can be said that the people of Calcutta who were directly concerned with female education had little to do with the revolt, and the Mutiny papers show that in the city there was an entire absence of any popular demonstration from first to last.³ Nor did the civil population of Bengal join the Mutiny in protest against the social reforms, including the remarriage of widows. No doubt some such measures had had their opponents. But much of the opposition in Bengal to social changes were like constitutional opposition. Since many

³ *Home Misc*: vol. 726, Mutiny Papers of John William Kaye, State of Feeling in Calcutta, pp. 723-35.

new ideas first originated among the people themselves, any idea had the supporters as well as opponents. Had the social changes in Bengal been only the imposition from the government the story might have been different. If William Bentinck came forward to abolish the sati, Raja Rammohun had prepared ground for the same among his countrymen. If the government in 1857 supported the remarriage of widows, Vidyasagar had already created an opinion in its favour among the educated people. Similarly, before Bethune had thought of educating the daughters of the Hindus, among the intelligent Bengalis, the idea was beginning to take its root. By 1857, female education had received support from government only in Bengal, where the educated class were progressive enough to appreciate its value, and therefore, to interpret the Bethune female school as a cause of the Mutiny, as John William Kaye has done, is rather to make a wrong study of things.

Dalhousie had issued stringent measures against the crime of female infanticide. Against the sentiment of the directors, and of such subordinates as John Lawrence, he had prescribed capital punishment for the said custom. It was widely prevalent among the Rajputs and the Sikhs who had to obey his social regulations. But while the Sikhs helped the government against the mutineers, the Rajput population in general remained passive.

Even Dalhousie's general scheme of popular education did not escape criticism. But, the special enquiry, which was instituted when the promotion of education was alleged to be among the causes which brought about the outbreak, and the subsequent report of the Secretary of State for India dated April 1859, disproved the allega-

tion.⁴ It should not be forgotten that the desire for education was noticed among the people before the government decided to give it. When Thomason began his experiment, a population which was supposed to have been extremely conservative, nevertheless, received the government scheme of education without any suspicion or rather with great pleasure. With coming of the Education Despatch the desire for education began to grow. By 1857 when the revolt broke out, the Despatch of 1854 had hardly been put into effect. Village schools existed in India from time immemorial. There is no evidence to show that government aid to indigenous schools and the government supervision to improve the standard of education in any way drove the people into despair.

In this connection it may be pointed out further that in criticising the socio-economic policy of the British Indian administration during our period, the historians of England went to an extreme. For example, the authors of the *Cambridge History of India* brought in the construction of the Ganges Canal to the long list of Indian grievances against the British rule. India being an agricultural country the necessity of canals and irrigation was known to the people from a much earlier time than the British period. Not to speak of India's Hindu rulers of the past, some of her Muslim rulers had constructed canals for their subjects and earned their gratitude. So the construction of the great Ganges Canal did not contain in it anything so extraordinary as to have horrified a people however conservative they might have been. In the Punjab where Lord Dalhousie had begun a network of canals, the people rather saw a beneficial beginning

⁴ S.E.R., part ii, 1840-59, pp. 426-50, despatch no. 4 dated India Office, London, 7 April 1859.

of the new government, and such works in some way kept the Punjab quiet.

In conclusion it may be said that while a large number of political and religious grievances were enumerated against the British in the mutiny declarations, references to scientific and educational innovations were rather rare and insignificant. This fact supports our stand that the British historians on the Rising of 1857 did not take a very impartial view of the entire question. In trying to search the causes they tried to throw much of the blame on the Indian shoulder, with the intention to point out that while the Western scientific and humanitarian movement was a boon to India, India was too backward to appreciate it. While presuming this, they obviously slighted the political significance of the great rising. Be it sufficient to agree with Sir Richard Temple, who, while referring to the socio-economic innovations of the pre-Mutiny administration said in 1882 after his study of the events of his own time in India, "There was also another allegation to the effect that he (Dalhousie) permitted certain laws and projects to be brought forward which, however well meant, threatened some of the religious or social usages of the Natives. This was adduced after the outbreak of the mutinies, as a subsidiary reason to account for events which seemed almost unaccountably strange. It never had any real foundation, and after the lapse of time, is hardly worth discussing."*

Whatever suspicion Dalhousie's measures created among the English historians, and however strong was the censure passed against that Governor-General by

* Richard Temple, *Men and Events of My Time in India*, London, 1882, p. 105.

his own countrymen, nothing prevented what he had done from developing rapidly. The political disturbance and the transfer of power from the Company to the Crown did not alter the policy of economic and social development he had initiated. The subsequent governments rather regarded those measures as the basis of future improvements and the people received them with sustained appreciation. As a consequence, the railways, telegraph and the post were kept abreast of the time and the subject of education given necessary consideration. The permanence of his legacy is, thus, the greatest tribute to his statesmanship and farsightedness. If India fought against the British in 1857, it was a battle fought against men, not against ideas.

APPENDIX A

A list of railway companies formed between 1845-47

1. East India Railway Company,
(From Calcutta to the North West), December 1844-June 1845.
2. Great Indian Railway Company,
(From Bombay to Coringa on the Bay of Bengal with branches to communicate with Bijapore, Satara, Poonah, Ahmednuggur, Aurangabad, Hyderabad, Oomrawatty, Nagpore etc.), October 1844.
3. Great Indian Peninsula Railway Company,
(From Bombay to meet the main trunk-line between Allahabad and Calcutta), August 1846.
4. Great Western Railway of Bengal,
(From Calcutta to Rajmahal), August 1846.
5. Great North of India Railway Company.
(From Allahabad to the North West), August 1846.
6. Madras, Nellore, and Arcot Railway Company,
(Leading from Arcot to Cuddapah, as far as Hyderabad in order to form a junction there with one of the termini of the Indian Peninsula Railway Company), August 1846.
7. Direct Bombay and Madras Railway Company,
(From Bombay to Madras), September 1846.
8. Madras Railway Company,
(To introduce the system of railway communication into the territories under the Madras Presidency), July 1845.
9. Calcutta and Diamond Harbour Dock and Railway Company,
(To join Calcutta with Diamond Harbour), January 1847.
10. Great Bombay, Baroda, Cawnpore, and Lucknow Direct Railway Company,
(To join Bombay with Lucknow), November 1847.

APPENDIX B

A Extract from Dalhousie's Final Minute

"The political and military advantages which the Government of the Country derives from the possession of such an engine of power are too obvious to call for notice. But two remarkable instances of its efficacy,

which have fallen within my own immediate knowledge, will afford an illustration of its political value, which will not be without interest.

"When Her Majesty's 10th Hussars were ordered with all speed from Poona to the Crimea, a message requesting instructions regarding their despatch was one day received by me at Calcutta from the Government of Bombay, about nine o'clock in the morning. Instructions were forthwith sent off by the telegraph in reply; and an answer to that reply was again received at Calcutta from Bombay in the evening of the same day. A year before the same communications for the despatch of speedy reinforcements to the seat of war, which occupied by the telegraph no more than twelve hours, could not have been made in less than 30 days.

"The other instance was of a similar character. When it was resolved to send Her Majesty's 14th Dragoons from Meerut, orders were forthwith despatched by telegraph direct to the regiment at Bangalore. The corps was immediately got ready for service. It marched 200 miles, to Mangalore, and was there before the transport were ready to receive it."

(*P.P., H.C.*, 1856, vol. 45, pap. no. 245.)

APPENDIX C

Minutes by the Members of the Governor-General's Council on the Bombay Controversy

Minute by Sir F. Currie.

25 March 1851.

I concur generally in Mr. Bethune's remarks as to the value of English instruction, and I believe that it is through the medium of that language alone that the higher attainments in literature and science can be acquired and ideas connected there with interchanged and communicated.

The great mass of the people can only be reached through the vernacular. But it is by no means necessary that in pushing the vernacular, the cultivation of the English language in those higher branches of Education, which can only be reached by the English medium should be lost.

Minute by Hon'ble J. Lewis

25 March 1851.

I regret to find that the notion of some necessary antagonism between English and Vernacular education is so widely spread as it appears to be. They are not only not antagonistic but to my mind must be brought to operate effectually together before any impression can be made upon the ignorance and superstition which it is the object of all education to sweep away from the face of the earth.

A mere smattering of English I hold to be of no use or worse than useless. In English the object should be to bestow the highest possible education. In the Vernaculars, education should be as widely spread as possible.

Minute by Sir J. H. Littler.

24 May 1851.

There appears to be antagonism between Vernacular and English education, which is so frequently assumed to be the case by the too enthusiastic advocates of the one system or the other.

The two should, if possible, advance hand in hand.

(India Home Consultations, range 187|vol. 36.)

APPENDIX D

The Dalhousie Papers show that the Governor-General, from his arrival in India, took interest in the educational institutions of Calcutta which finally ended in his recommendation for the establishment of the Presidency College. Below is an extract from his long minute on the subject of education in Calcutta. That speaks of his attitude towards higher education.

"I have eagerly studied the question of Government Educational Institutions at Calcutta, as set forth by the Council of Education in their able and comprehensive letter of 4th August 1853; which describes the actual condition of those Institutions at the present time, and the changes which the Council recommends the Government to make.

"Concurring for the most part in the conclusions at which the Council of Education has arrived, I feel that it would be worse than superfluous for me to retrace in this minute the course of argument by which it has been led to the conclusions it has formed. The arguments cannot be more forcibly or more clearly stated than in the language of the letter before me, and I desire to refer to it for the reasons of the several decisions in which I adopt the opinion of the Council. I shall restrict this minute, therefore, to a mere recital of those decisions, and to a statement of the reasons that have induced me in some respects to prefer measures, which go beyond the suggestions of the Council and which it perhaps did not consider itself authorised to propose.

"The Council of Education concludes with justice that the Government has not done for the encouragement of sound Education in this Capital all that was desirable, or even all that would have been its positive duty if the public finances had not been for many years past, and until very lately in a condition which clogged the action of the State.

"While Agra, Delhi, Benares and many other places of lesser note and inferior importance possess each of them a Government College for general instruction, in Calcutta, the metropolis of the British dominions in the East. there is no general college at all.

"The Madrisa has been established for the special advantage of the Mussulmans....

"The Hindoo College and the Sanskrit College which have been set apart for the use of the Hindoos are flourishing; but both are exclusive in their character.... The Council accordingly proposes to reform the Madrisa.... The Council further proposes to revolutionise the Hindoo College—preserving the Sanskrit College and the junior department as they are now, the Council would break down the principle of exclusiveness in which the Hindoo College has hitherto been conducted, and to throw the College open to all castes, classes, and creeds.

"The Council would constitute the Hindoo College, when thus thrown open, the Government College of the metropolis of India.

"It is in my humble judgment, the clear duty of the Government of India to provide for its people in the City, the seat of Government, such educational institutions as shall afford to all who seek there the means of acquiring sound instruction, both in elementary knowledge and in the higher branches of learning.

"It is not less the duty of the Government to maintain in Calcutta, as heretofore, the seminaries of that peculiar oriental learning which is cultivated by the great sects of Hindoos and Mussulmans respectively.

"And it is further the duty and the policy of the Government to multiply facilities for acquiring a solid Vernacular and English Education by the youth of every sect, and colour and creed.

"These principles I hold in common with the Council of Education But speaking on behalf of the Government, and unfettered by consideration of finance by which the Council has probably felt its freedom of suggestion hampered, I would propose to effect the objects that we have in view by a scheme more extended than that which has been laid before me, and free from some plausible objections which appear to me to attach to a portion of the Council's plan.

"The portion of that plan which appears open to objection is the proposal for an abolition of the exclusive character of the Hindoo College....

"It is impolitic, I think, to afford unnecessarily a pretext for the circulation of any colourable complaint that the Government was breaking faith with the Hindoo Community that it was promiscuously admitting all classes to a seminary which was established for Hindoos alone—and that although a Government College had been erected it was upon the ruins of the Hindoo College that its foundations were laid....

"Lapse of years and change of circumstances have rendered it desirable that Education should now be given in a more general form, such as the Hindoos everywhere share in at all other Government Colleges in India....

"A new general College should be established at Calcutta by the Government, which should be termed 'The Presidency College', in order to distinguish it by name from all merely local and private institutions, and in order to give it an official character.

"A fitting edifice should be built for the students entered at this College.

The College should be open to all youths of every caste, class, or creed.

"The Principal, Professors of the senior departments of the present Hindoo College should become the establishment of the Presidency College.

"The Hindoo College, thus revised, should be maintained exclusively for Hindoos. It should consist of two main divisions, namely the Sanskrit College, and the junior dept.

"The Madrisa should be kept up exclusively for the Mussulmans. . . .

"Boys of the Hindoo faith, whether they be of the higher or lower class, will have access to a sound elementary course of Vernacular and English education, in the junior department of the Hindoo College, and in the Colootollah branch school, respectively.

"Boys of Mussulman creed will have access to a similar education in the junior department of Madrisa, and in its branch school at Collinga.

"Boys of every other faith will find these same advantages in either of the branch schools above mentioned to which they may choose to resort.

"The time, I doubt not, will come, though it is probably still in the distant future, when the Presidency College, having elevated itself by its reputation and being enriched by endowments and scholarships, will extend its sphere of attraction far beyond the local limits which it is now designed to serve; and when, strengthened by the most distinguished scholars from other cities, and united with the Medical College in all its various departments, as well as with other Professorships of practical science and art whose establishment cannot be long postponed, it will expand itself into something approaching to the dignity and proportions of an Indian University.

"I cannot ever expect to see it, even from a distance, ripen into such maturity. But foreseeing that such a day will come, I am anxious at this time that all our present plans should provide that skilful care shall watch over its growth, and that fullest scope shall be afforded for its expansion.

"That the management shall be vested wholly and exclusively in the Council of Education. . . .

"That the scholarships already founded, together with such further scholarships as their funds of 30,000 Rupees will endow, shall be allotted between the Hindoo College and the Presidency College. . . . such scholarships, however, being open only to students of the Hindoo Population.

"I should hope that this may not occupy much time, and that before I resign the active administration of the Government of Bengal, I shall have the satisfaction of seeing the Educational Institutions of the Capital placed upon a footing adequate to the wants of the Community, and worthy of the Government of the Honourable Company."

(Dalhousie Papers, Governor-General's Minutes,
vol. xiv, 17 October 1853.)

APPENDIX E

Note on Vernacular Education

by ISHWARCHANDRA SARMA

7 February, 1854

Vernacular Education on an extensive scale and on an efficient footing is highly desirable. For it is by this means alone that the condition of the mass of the people can be ameliorated.

Mere reading and writing and a little of arithmetic should not comprise the whole of this education. Geography, History, Biography, Arithmetic, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, Political Economy and Physiology should be taught to render it complete. . . .

One teacher for each school will not be sufficient. Two for each at least will be required.

The salary of the Pandits should be at least thirty, twenty-five, twenty rupees per month, qualification and other circumstances being taken into consideration. When all the books shall be ready for adoption, every school should have a head pandit at 50 rupees a month.

Arrangements should be made for the teachers receiving their salaries regularly every month in their own stations without being required to quit their posts.

The success of Vernacular education greatly depends on an active and efficient supervision as well as the amount of encouragement given to the successful pupils. With natives in general, the acquisition of knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself has not as yet become a motive. It is therefore necessary that Lord Hardinge's Resolution which has so long been in abeyance should be strictly enforced.

The following plan of superintendence appears to be much less expensive and far more efficient than any other could possibly be.

Two native Superintendents each on a salary of 150 rupees a month including their travelling charges to be employed, one for Mirzapore and Hooghly, the other for Naddia and Burdwan. They are frequently to visit the schools, examine the classes, and notify the mode of teaching.

The Principal of the Sanskrit College to be nominated the ex-officio head superintendent with no other additional allowance than his travelling charges which at the most will not exceed 300 rupees per annum. He is to visit the schools once a year and to report to the authorities with whom will rest the management of Vernacular schools.

The preparation and adoption of class books and the selection of Teachers to be entrusted to the Head Superintendent.

The Sanskrit College besides being a seat of general education to be also considered as the Normal school for the training of Vernacular Teachers.

Thus the training of teachers, preparation and adoption of class books, selection of Teachers and general superintendence will be united in one office. This circumstance will remove many inconveniences.

The superintendents will also be required to consider it as part of their duty to persuade the inhabitants of Towns and Villages within their respective beats to establish Schools upon the model of Government schools.

ISHWARCHANDRA

7 February, 1854.

I.H.C. 188|13 No. 105.

APPENDIX F

WOOD PAPERS

INDIA BOARD PAPERS

Box No.—Nil. Date—Nil.

Place—Nil.

Place—Nil.

(Different Stages of Education Draft).

[Extracts]

1st. Draft on Education

One of the chief points of inquiry before the Committees of both Houses last year was the subject of Native Education in India. Further back, from the days of Elphinstone and Munro there is no Indian question upon which more has been written by great authorities in India since in 1813 a sum of £10,000 a year was set apart by Parliament to be spent upon Native Education.

No one disputes that great progress had been made since 1832.

The great discussion ended in the substitution of English for Sanskrit and Arabic—by Lord William Bentinck—in other words Solid Knowledge was substituted for what the natives thought was solid knowledge.

In Bengal the whole of the attention of the Council of Education has been directed to increasing the number of English Colleges and Schools—and by means of scholarships—competed for from all of them—to finding what knowledge should be the aim of the higher education in them all. This varied as the classical or mathematical bias of the active members of the Council prevailed for the time.

The general result was that many persons acquired a high intellectual standard of attainments—and in many cases improved native talent was at the command of Government for employment.

The education of the masses in Bengal was altogether neglected, except almost accidentally in Assam.

The Oriental Colleges were in an unsatisfactory state.

The medical college attained very great success, at a very considerable cost—as it was necessary to pay the students stipends.

In Bombay high English Education was given at the Elphinstone Institution, and offered at a few schools in the districts, as well as a lower kind of instruction through the Vernacular language—in a large number on Vernacular education.

In Madras, the scheme of Lord Elphinstone in 1842 had resulted in nothing but a very small but efficient High School at Madras—owing to disagreements upon the question of instruction in the Bible.

In the N. W. Provinces, Mr. Thomason, unfettered by a Council had obtained the sanction of the Court to a plan for making the Indigenous schools of the country as useful as possible—which was generally approved of. A College for Civil Engineers was founded at Roorkee.

The statistical results of Education in *India* were as follows:—

English Colleges	..	11	} number taught	..	8,657
„ Schools	..	40			
Oriental Colleges	..	8	..	..	1,631
Vernacular Schools	..	333	..	..	19,718
Professional Colleges	..	4	..	..	366

at a cost to the State of about £90,000. Of this sum £13,000 was spent on Vernacular education.

The Committees also obtained statistics of Missionary Schools—showing:—

English Schools	..	92	pupils	..	13,189	} for boys.
Vernacular „	..	1,120	„	..	38,102	
Boarder „	..	86	„	..	2,167	
Day	..	262	„	..	8,772	} for girls.
Boarding	..	97	„	..	2,576	

Half of the English Scholars were in Bengal— $\frac{2}{3}$ rd of the Vernacular Scholars in Madras.

There were also accounts showing that in the Presidency Towns there were a considerable number of private schools.

The general result of the information showed that in the North Western Provinces alone was there anything approaching to a systematic scheme for educating or improving the education of the people.

That in Bengal and in the neighbourhood of the other Presidency Towns there was a considerable demand for English—which had been responded to by the Government.

That wherever practical education had been attempted it had been most successful and that a very considerable private agency might be taken advantage of, if grants-in-aid were sanctioned.

There was ample information from which to draw up a general scheme—and to make Native Education an integral part of the ordinary administration in India.

SIR CHARLES WOOD

India Board Papers.

Dated—Nil.

Bundle of paper showing “various stages through which the Education Draft of 1854 passed.”

1st Draft on Education.

2nd Stage of the Draft

Wood Papers.

Dated—Nil.

India Public Department.

Promotion of General Education in India.

You are probably aware that during the discussions which took place in the last session of Parliament, relating to the Act for the future Government of India, great interest was expressed on the subject of Education, and a strong desire manifested for its extension and improvement.

With a view to give effect to these feelings and wishes,.....we have taken the subject into our careful consideration, and we now proceed to communicate to you the conclusions at which we have arrived, with regard to the improvements of which the existing system may be susceptible, and the extent to which Government aid should be afforded in the promotion of general Education in India.

The measures of our several Governments have, till within a recent period, been confined almost entirely to the maintenance of a few institutions set apart, respectively, for the cultivation of the learned languages

of the East, Sanskrit and Arabic, and for affording instruction in European Science and literature, in varying degrees of advancement, through the medium of the English language.

The number of pupils who receive their education in Colleges and Schools of the above descriptions, appears to be at this time between *nine and ten thousand*. The annual sum disbursed from the Public Treasury for the maintenance of those institutions, including the expense of scholarships and prizes, may be taken at some what more than seven lacs, or seventy thousand pounds: and the pupils contribute in tuition fees a further sum of about one lac of rupees towards their expenses. These sums however by no means represent the total income of the Colleges and schools in connection with Government; considerable sums arising from endowments in money and lands, and from other sources, being applicable to the purposes of the institutions.

The quality of the instruction afforded at the English Colleges and schools is represented as being highly efficient, witnesses, of widely differing views as to the Government system of education generally, having, in their evidence before the Parliamentary Committees, concurred in their testimony on this point. It appears however that the proportion of the pupils who attain to any high degree of intellectual cultivation is very small,.....

There does not appear to exist at present any general desire to pursue knowledge for its own sake, and perhaps in the present circumstances of Native Society in India, such a feeling cannot be expected to arise except to a limited extent.

The main stimulus to the study of English seems hitherto to have been afforded by the hope of obtaining official employment under Government; and this motive has been fostered and encouraged by orders passed at various times requiring a certain amount of education in those admitted to the public service, and in some cases providing for the formation of lists of those, who having passed a public examination for the purpose of testing their acquirements, have been pronounced qualified for public employment.....

The formation or encouragement of Vernacular schools, where the great mass of the People might receive instruction suited to their condition in life, has only lately been engaged in on a systematic plan. In Bengal, the attempts hitherto made have proved unsuccessful, but in the North Western Provinces the results of the plan experimentally adopted, on the recommendation of the late Lieutenant Governor, in 1849, appear to be highly satisfactory and the work seems also to be progressing favourably, though more slowly, under the encouragement afforded by the Board of Education, at Bombay.

.....It is impossible not to feel, on a consideration of the facts of which we have now taken a brief review, that the time has arrived when measures of a far wider scope should be adopted, for affording to the various classes of society in India the means of obtaining a

sound, practical education suited to their several conditions and circumstances.

.....As regards the improvement of the system, now existing under the control of Government for extending general education, we may state, briefly that we are desirous that such an extension of it should take place, as will provide a complete system of Colleges and Schools, in regular gradations from the Vernacular schools upwards, in which, according to their opportunities and their capacity for improvement, the means of Education may be provided for all classes.....

In order to afford a useful English Education to those who are unable to resort to the Colleges, as well as to serve as feeders of those Institutions, efficient English schools should be supported at the more important Provincial Towns on the general model of those now existing, but, in order to accomplish the object proposed, in considerably increased numbers. In these schools, inducements should be held out to the pupils to apply themselves with diligence to their Vernacular studies, which at present, though included in the course of instruction, seem to be too much neglected.

The requirements of English Instruction being thus provided for, it will be desirable that, in accordance with the experimental measures in operation in the North Western Provinces, Vernacular Schools of a superior class should be maintained by Government in such numbers as may be found requisite throughout the country, each of which would be the centre of a system of village schools and serve as a model on which these should be conducted.

With regard to the village schools the plan, already acted on with success in the N. W. Provinces and in Bombay, of assisting and encouraging the efforts of the people themselves for the improvement of existing schools, should be adhered to; and there seems no reason to doubt that this mode of proceeding will be found adequate to the end in view.

* * * * *

In order to secure the thorough efficiency of any extended plan of general education the establishment of a regular system of Inspection and the organization of Normal schools or classes, where young men may be trained in the art of teaching and in the management of schools, will be indispensably necessary.....

Having now stated our views as to the proper measures to be taken for placing the means of education within reach of the population, it remains to be considered what inducements are to be held out to them to avail themselves of the opportunities so provided.....

The multiplication of scholarships in due proportion to the extension we wish to see given to the operations of Government in the department of Education, is the first and most simple mode of affording the requisite encouragement; and we look forward to this as a necessary part of the measures to be taken under our present orders. In accordance with the spirit of the remarks we have already made, the Government scholarships

will not, hereafter, be confined to the pupils in the Government Colleges and schools, but will be tenable by the pupils of all the institutions, which may be brought under Government inspection and reported to come up to the required standard.

.....With this expression of our sentiments on the various questions connected with this important subject, we now commend it to your serious and early consideration. It is our desire that you should frame a general scheme applicable to the whole of India, which may be put in force, with due regard to local circumstances, by the Government of the several Presidencies; and we shall be prepared to sanction whatever expenditure may prove necessary to carry out with efficiency the various measures which may ultimately be determined on. We shall await the result of your deliberations with the greatest interest and in the full assurance, that you will cordially concur with us in promoting an object so directly affecting the welfare and happiness of the population committed to our Government and will spare no pains to carry it out in an effectual manner.

Education. Proposed P. C. from E. I. House.

2nd Stage of the Education Draft.

Third Stage in the Education Draft.

Dated — Nil.

When we remember, that after the lapse of 20 years, and a considerable outlay of public money, no more than 9,000 youths attend the Government English schools; while but 20,000 are in any degree brought under the influence of the different systems of Government Vernacular education, we are compelled to admit that the numerical result is insignificant indeed in relation to the 8 millions of youths of an age fit for instruction in British India. We are impressed with the almost insuperable difficulties, which would attend such an extension of direct education by Government as might be hoped to supply, in any reasonable time, so enormous a deficiency; and, adequately to carry out the objects we have before us of extending the benefits of education as far as possible to all classes in India, we rely upon this system to call out private efforts to assist and often to supply the place of direct education by Government and we have accordingly determined to adopt in India the system of grants in aid of private efforts, which has been attended with satisfactory results in this country.

.....The subject of the Education of the mass of the people through their mother tongues is one to which we have anxiously considered and it is the part of the general Educational Scheme which has hitherto we are bound to admit been most neglected. Out of a total annual expenditure upon Education of about 80,000 (£) but 13,000 is

now applied to Vernacular Education, and a considerable part of this sum has only of late years been so applied.

In the Bombay Presidency considerable attention has been given to Vernacular Education—it appears that 216 Vernacular Schools are under the management of the Board of Education, and that the number of pupils is more than 12,000. These exertions are most creditable to the Government of Bombay, and as we have recently sanctioned an increase of Rs. 50,000 per annum to the Educational Grant for that Presidency, we believe that they will now have sufficient funds to make each Government Vernacular School a centre from which the Indigenous Schools of the adjacent districts may be inspected and encouraged.

The Lt. Governor of the N.W.P. proposed to us a scheme—which was sanctioned, —and which has been carried out in 8 districts under the able direction of Mr. Henry Stewart Reid.

In the Presidency of Bengal but little has hitherto been effected with regard to Vernacular Education, as all the efforts and funds at the command of the Council of Education were required in order to supply the rapidly increasing demand for instruction—in the English language. The existing institutions are confined to the Government Vernacular Schools, which were placed under the management of the Board of Revenue in the year 1844, and 101 of which were originally allotted to certain districts. 73 was the largest number ever established; and at the present time but 33 remain and the number of pupils is only 1400. From the Report of the Council of Education for 1851|2, we find that these schools were transferred in April 1852 to the charge of the Council, and that information has been called for as to their condition.

We have perused with considerable interest the report of Mr. Robinson, the Inspector of the Assam Schools, of which there are 74, containing upwards of 3000 pupils.

In Madras, where no efforts have as yet been made by Government to encourage Vernacular education, we can only remark with satisfaction that Mr. D. Elliot in a recent minute has stated that the North Western Provinces system might be readily introduced into the Madras Presidency, where the Ryotwari settlement offers similar inducements to the people for practical education.

Education

first copy.

Education Draft

first copy.

APPENDIX G

Mr. Bethune (Legislative Councillor at Calcutta) to the President.

(Private)

Calcutta, 22 April 1850.

My dear Sir John,

I have now to ask your good offices further in the same matter. "The Queen's name is a tower of strength", no doubt, but, if the tower be gilded, it tends more alike to the solace of those who live under it, and to the glory of her who builds it; and I am fortunately able to suggest a plan, by which Her Majesty, if she is so advised, may grant these new schools the additional substantial benefit, without cost to herself, or to her Chancellor of the Exchequer. Indeed the grant that I wish to obtain for this purpose seems like a Godsend meant expressly for this purpose. To explain, I must go a few years back.

A certain Rajah Kistonath Roy some years ago, stood charged with suspicion of murder, and thereupon committed suicide, having previously made a will whereby he bequeathed all his vast estates for the promotion of education in Bengal. This will was contested by the widow, who set up a previous will in her favour, and after some litigation, she prevailed, on some doubts of the Court as to the validity of the execution of the second will, which, nevertheless, it was not doubted, contained the expression of his last wishes.

Thus the estates were lost to us. It happened, however, that on some previous litigation in the family, a large sum of money had been paid into the Supreme Court by the Rajah to meet the demands for maintenance by some ladies, of whom, I believe, his grandmother was one.

This money was still in Court when he committed suicide, and subject to the annuities payable out of it, became forfeit to the Crown, on his suicide.

The Directors have recently taken the opinion of the Advocate General on this question, and he has given it that, it is unquestionably forfeit.

I know that the Chief Justice entertains the same opinion, and thinks, indeed, there is no room for doubt about it.

The principal sum, by an account I have got from the Accountant to the Court, exceeds six lacs and a half. The grandmother is now dead, which has set at liberty, available forthwith an annuity of eight hundred rupees a month. There is one other annuitant still alive. Now, looking to the avowed intention of the late Rajah to have left *all* his property for education, which was defeated only by legal formalities, and considering also that his family is amply provided for by possession of his landed estates, I think it would be a very fitting appropriation of this money, if Her Majesty would grant it to the East India Company for

purposes of education, *especially with reference to female education*. My school costs me at present about five hundred rupees a month; for there are many incidental expenses in hiring carriages for the children etc. etc., which it is unnecessary to detail; and the whole sum of eight hundred rupees a month will not be too much prospectively, if it becomes what I trust it will in the course of another twenty years....

I mentioned it to Lord Dalhousie, and, as I before said, he promised to write to you to back my application. If he has not done so, you will, I hope, take it on my assurance that he meant to do it.

Your's very faithfully,
J. E. D BETHUNE.

APPENDIX H

Extract from the Education Despatch of the 19th July 1854 from the Court of Directors to the Government of India.

The System of Grants-in-aid

Para 51. The consideration of the impossibility of Government alone doing all that must be done in order to provide adequate means for the education of the natives of India, and of the ready assistance which may be derived from efforts which have hitherto received but little encouragement from the State, has led us to the natural conclusion that the most effectual method of providing for the wants of India in this respect will be to combine with the agency of the Government the aid which may be derived from the exertions and liberality of the educated and wealthy natives of India and of other benevolent persons.

52. We have, therefore, resolved to adopt in India the system of grants-in-aid which has been carried out in this country (England) with very great success; and we confidently anticipate, by thus drawing support from local resources in addition to contributions from the State, a far more rapid progress of education than would follow a mere increase of expenditure by the Government; while it possesses the additional advantage of fostering a spirit of reliance upon local exertions and combination for local purposes, which is of itself of no mean importance to the well-being of a nation.

54. It has been found by experience, in this and in other countries, that not only an entirely gratuitous education valued far less by those who receive it than one for which some payment, however small, is made, but that the payment induces a more regular attendance and greater exertion on the part of the pupils; and, for this reason, as well as because school fees themselves, insignificant as they may be in each individual instance, will in the aggregate, when applied to the support of a better class of masters, become of very considerable importance, we desire that

grants-in-aid shall, as a general principle, be made to such schools only (with the exception of normal schools) as require some fee, however small, from their scholars.

57. In carrying into effect our views, which apply alike to all schools and institutions, whether male or female, anglo-vernacular or vernacular, it is of the greatest importance that the conditions under which schools will be assisted should be clearly and publicly placed before the natives of India.

62. We look forward to the time when any general system of education entirely provided by Government may be discontinued, with the gradual advance of the system of grants-in-aid, and when many of the existing Government institutions, especially those of the higher order, may be safely closed, or transferred to the management of local bodies under the control of, and aid by, the State. But it is far from our wish to check the spread of education in the slightest degree by the abandonment of a single school to probable decay; and we therefore entirely confide in your discretion, and in that of the different authorities, while keeping this object steadily in view, to act with caution, and to be guided by special reference to the particular circumstances which affect the demand for education in different parts of India.

(Selections from Educational Records,
Part II, 1840-1859. Education Des-
patch, 19 July 1854.)

APPENDIX I

The following abstract will show the classes and the localities in the Punjab infected by the practice of female infanticide.

Su-
es. { "Infanticide prevails among the Rajpoots who inhabit the North-West parts of the Umbala district, in the Tehseel-daree division of Roopur and Khurur: also in some of the Rajpoot villages of Thanesur and Kaeethul. The Burars of the Feerozepore district, who inhabit pergunnas Maree, Fureedkot, and Kot-kapoor, likewise the Dogurs on the banks of the Sutlej, practise it. There are but few Bedee families, and they are scattered; but they all follow the custom.

In the Julundhur and Hooheearpoor districts, it has been heretofore practised by all the Bedees. In the latter, as also in Kangra, it is with few exceptions, followed by the Rajpoot tribes.

The Bedees all practise it. Dera Baba Nanuk is their stronghold. The Khutrees of the Goojranwala district, practise it to a limited extent, as also certain Mussulmans of the tribe Rat.

undhu
vision.

Lahore
Division

The higher class of Rajpoots, connected with the royal Rajpoots of the Hills, also follow it. They principally reside in pergunnas Deenanugur and Shukurghur, of the Goordaspoor district, and in pergunna Seealkote, of the Seealkote district. The Munhas tribe of Rajpoots, are those who most practise it also those of the tribe Saleria, Jumoowal, and Charuk Rajpoots.

Mooltan
Division.

The Khutrees are said to practise it, and also some Brahmins. The Khutrees who chiefly commit infanticide in the Jhung district, are those of the Khuna and Kupoo-tribes, also those of the Urhaeghur branch of the Mahrotra tribe. The Mahomedans of the Bhurwana and Kumalana clans of Seeals, considered to be of imperial rank, follow the custom. In the Gogaira district it prevails among Hindoos of the following classes :—

Beddes — Dhoun — Vij.
Khutrees, Handee — Khuna — Kupoor.
Chopra.

Ootrades of the Arora caste; and among the Mahomedan tribes as follows :—

Vutoo, Futcana, Kateea, Khuruls, Biloches, Jogcea, Doodhee, Kuth and Awan. It likewise appears to be practised by the Mussulmans of the royal blood of the Soodoozaee and Khoduka Patans.

Jelum
Division

In the Rawul Pindee district, the Bedees universally follow the practice of Infanticide. In the Goojrat district, the Rajpoots, inhabiting the Northern Pergunnas under the Hills follow it, particularly those of the tribes known as Bhao, Dhib, Ratch and Munhas.

In the Shapoor district, the practice is followed by Beedeas, Sodhee, Urhaeghur and Multour divisions of the Khutree classes, and by the following Musulman tribes :—

Bhutee, Khurl, Nuswanah, Gongul, Salce, Galoter, and Jahrur.

But the Gondul class practise it most extensively, on account of the great expense attending the marriages in this tribe, which custom has descended to the present generation.

Leia
Division

Infanticide does not prevail in the Dera Ismael Khan and Leia districts, and to a very limited extent in that of Dera Ghazee Khan; and then only among the Khutrees of the Gosain sects.

In the Khanghur district, formerly included in Mooltan, which it adjoins, infanticide is largely practised among the higher classes of Khutree, viz., the Kuna, Mahrota, Kupoor, Khedana, and Set-Kukur classes.

Peshawur
Division.

Infanticide does not prevail either in the Peshawur district, or in Hazara.

The above summary shows that Infanticide is very prevalent in the Punjab."

(Vide Minute on Infanticide in the Punjab, by R. Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner in the Punjab. Selections from the Public Correspondence of the Administration, for the Affairs of the Punjab. Vol I Nos. I to VI. Lahore, 1857.)

APPENDIX J

Extract from the Report of G. E. Russell dated 11 May 1837.

"It is believed that the victims may be of any caste, sex or age; but Mr. Stevenson to whose inquiry I am indebted for most of my information on this subject, did not hear of any instances of Khonds having been sacrificed. Grown men are the most esteemed, because the most costly. Children are purchased and reared for years with the family of the person who ultimately devotes them to a cruel death when circumstances are supposed to demand a sacrifice at his hands. They seem to be treated with kindness and if young are kept under no constraint, but when old enough to be sensible of the fate that awaits them, they are placed in fetters and guarded. There appears to be no difficulty in procuring victims—most of those who were rescued had been sold by their parents or nearest relations. Persons of riper age are kidnapped by wretches who trade in human flesh. The victim must always be purchased, the price is paid indifferently in brass, utensils, cattle or corn. The Zanee or priest officiates at the sacrifice. For a month prior to the sacrifice there is much feasting and intoxication and dancing round the 'Meriah' (victim), who is adorned with garlands, and on the day before the performance of the barbarous rite, is stupefied with toddy and made to sit, or if necessary, is bound at the bottom of a post, bearing the effigy above described. The assembled multitude then dance around to music and addressing the earth, say, "O God we offer the sacrifice to you—give us good crops, seasons and health", after which they address the victim, "We bought you with a price, and did not seize you—now we sacrifice you according to custom, and no sin rests on us." On the following day, the victim being again intoxicated and anointed with oil, each individual present touches the anointed part, and wipes the oil on his own head. All then proceed in procession around the village, and its boundaries,

preceded by music, bearing the victim, and a pole, to the top of which is attached a tuft of peacock's feathers. On returning to the post which is placed near the village deity called 'Zakaree Pennoo' and represented by three stones near which the brass effigy in the shape of the peacock is buried, kill a hog in sacrifice, and having allowed the blood to flow into a pit prepared for the purpose, the victim who, if it has been found possible, has been previously made senseless from intoxication is seized and thrown in, and his face pressed down until he is suffocated in the bloody mire amid the noise of instruments. The Zanee then cuts a piece of flesh from the body and buries it with ceremony near the effigy and village idol as an offering to the earth. All the rest afterwards go through the same form and carry the bloody prize to their villages where the same rites are performed, part being interred near the village idol, and little bits on the boundaries. The head and face remain untouched, and the bones when bare are buried with them in the pit. Of the many ways in which the unhappy victim is destroyed in different parts, that just described is perhaps the least cruel. In Sreeramporam and Guddapooram in the maliaha of Chinna Kimeddy, the effigy represents the elephant, and there, as in part of the Goomsoor maliahs also, the flesh is cut off when the unfortunate creature is still alive. I have understood that in Jeypore and Kalahandy and Bastar the victims are supplied by seizing inhabitants of the neighbouring provinces."

(Selections from Records of Government of India, Madras, no. xxiv, (1856), Report of G. E. Russell, 11 May 1837.)

APPENDIX K

Extract from Dalhousie's Diary dated Sunday the 23rd of June 1850.

"On Friday morning (21st) we left camp at 4 O'clock in the morning... The hills on this side were clothed to the very summit with forest, wherein the varying green of the pine and oak were mingled except where the grey cliffs broke through the forest and relieved the gloominess of its tints. About one third of the way from the summit cultivation began, and thence down to the river bank the whole face of the mountain was a light expanse of corn fields, and orchards of apricot and peas. Midway a broad tableland afforded a site on which were placed the palace or fort of the Rajah, and round it a group of village houses, all picturesque. The Rajah's house had all the character of a mountain stronghold, and with its tall square tower of grey stone, and the sharp peaked roof about it, the narrow slit windows, and the door halfway up the wall, it might readily have passed for (*one word missing*) armstrong tower. This I afterwards found was a very sacred place and

was used as temple; the lower square tower connected with the first by a gallery, and the houses forming 3 sides of the square with the towers for the 4th, being the residences of the Rajah and his suite. No one is even admitted into this holy place: not even the tutor of the Rajah, who is a Hindoo, has even made his way into it, and frightful tales are told of the scenes which are still acted there. Not very many years ago it is well known that human sacrifices were weekly offered up before the idol of the Goddess Kali to whom the temple is dedicated, and it is believed that the horrid rite has not yet altogether ceased. The stated sacrifice has of course been abandoned; nor can it be ascertained for certain that a victim is even offered now. But it is believed that occasionally some infirm old wretch, at death's door already, is brought to have his blood poured out before the Goddess: and the extreme secrecy which is observed, --the excessive jealousy with which all access is barred even to members of the Rajah's household, unless they be of their own tribe,--give colour to the belief.

"This secrecy, however, is itself a proof that the last stage of the endurance of such horrors has been reached, and that in this and other hill states tributary to us, . . . the sacrifice will soon for ever cease, if it has not ceased already."

(*Diary*, 1850, part ii.)

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